Sunday, December 30, 2007 44 15 sections | Vol. 33 / No. 22 P28

KIDS OUT THIS OLD YEAR
With their nannies and security guards, cousins and friends, the grandchildren of President Arroyo rode what else but under reclines to do what in Baguio City for the holidays, or horseback riding. Jacinto native horses on the grounds of The Manor, the president's official residence in the summer capital, are Eva Victoria Miranda Arroyo (1st horse, in pink), Monique Macaranggal Arroyo (2nd horse, in blue) and Miguel Gloria Macaranggat Arroyo. (R) Arroyo and her family are growing the Mon Tzus in the City of Pines. LYDDAGUY

Erap eyes new Palace run

'If there's no common opposition candidate'

By Norman Bordadora

THE POLITICAL OPPOSITION is swelling with "presidentiables."

Now, even deposed President Joseph Estrada may yet run again for president should the opposition fail to come up with a common standard-bearer against whoever the Arroyo administration will field in 2010.

"It depends. If the opposition fails to come to an agreement on a common candidate," Estrada said.

Former Sen. Jovito Salonga, a close Estrada ally and leader of the United Opposition (UNO), said the first option for UNO is to unite the "five or six" presidential aspirants.

They include Senate President Manuel Villar, Governor Freddie Lacson, Lorenzo Tanada and Francis Escudero, and Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay.

Sen. Manuel Roxas of the Liberal Party has also declared his intention to run for president. The LP rebuke not in the 2001 conference, is an offer of the opposi-

FULL 10

Sisa, Crispin, Basilio lived here, say Bulacan townsfolk

By Fe Zamora

SAN RAFAEL, BULACAN—FOR many of this town's residents, José Rizal's unforgettable fictional characters Sisa, Crispin and Basilio are only extensions of his 1906 contrary to set "Noli Me Tangere," they actually roamed the streets here.

According to local lore, the bloodletton on a wall in the basement of the San Jose de Dios church was actually Crispin's. Sisa's youngest son whose disappearance and probable death caused her to lose her mind.

The story, told and retold by the elders to small-fry, goes like this: The local executioner had Crispin whipped over some missing coin. The boy's bloodied body was thrown into a vault of the convent, known to be used by his mother.

This supposedly true-to-life account would be commemorated

THERE HE WAS. Crispin and Basilio of Rizal's pronouncing Noli Me Tangere fame, over Crispin's shoulder are the real cure "tool and vitae," according to the heritage conservation folk of San Rafael, Bulacan.

LOUIS ALCANTARA

FULL 10

Battle-tested Marines guard Rizal Shrine 14 hours a day

By Tara Quimbatada

BATTLE-TESTED BY DAILIAN and kin, a certain battalion of within the Armed Forces of the Philippines comes out a special kind of mission at the country's Kilometer Zero, where the "Ground Zero" includes the scorching sudden sun, heavy downpours, the cult of tourists, and all sorts of distractions from builders and curious pranksters.

Some guards from the Philippine Marines log in 14-hour days standing sore the 99-year-old monument and lonely altar of national hero Dr.

BATTLE-TESTED 10

Pakistan gov't says Bhutto killed by bump in head

ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN—POLlowing the ticket of opposition leader Benazir Bhutto on Friday, the Pakistani government announced a new version of her assassination, according to Islamic extremist. Indeed for the official conventional wave gunpowder killing Bhutto.

It also made a surprising announcement that Bhutto was killed not by gunshots or shrapnel but from concussion by her head caused by a car's sunroof vehicle rating

to duck. (See related story in The World, Page A25.)

Bhutto was killed Thursday evening when a suicide attacker shot at her and blew himself up as she left a rally in the garrison city of Rawalpindi across Islamabad. Authorities initially said the shot from bullet wounds, and a surgeon who treated her said the suspect from shrapnel in her skull killed her.

But Chrissie said Bhutto was

PAKISTAN 10

Oxford friends remember 'fiery, fun' glamorous personality

By Katherine Haddon

LONDON—BENAZIR BHUTto's British university friends are remembered her bright as a "fiery and fun" figure who cut a glamorous swath through the dreaming spires of Oxford during the 1970s.

Bhutto was a well-known figure around the British campus any other she became the first Asian woman to be elected president of the Oxford Union debating society, often flying world leaders as a star turn.

She reportedly held some of

OXFORD 14

Ex-ABS-CBN news team holds reunion, talks about the good ole' days

By Ariyo Ardo Cruz

THOSE WERE THE DAYS.

For men executives, managers, anchors, reporters, writers, editors, crew and production staff of the old news icon of the Lopez-owned ABS-CBN gathered Thursday for a night of fun and reminiscing at the Forest

ABS-CBN 10

Missing activist couple released by military in Leyte

By Joey A. Sabarre
Inquirer Visayas
and Jerusalen Aning
in Manila

AFTER SEVEN MONTHS IN captivity, couple Manuel Pajes, 61, and Juliet Fernandez, 48, aged

members of the New People's Army (NPA), were released by the military on Wednesday.

Lt. Col. Jonathan Potot, commanding officer of the 92nd Infantry Battalion, presented Pajes and Fernandez to members of the media on Dec. 26 to

help report that government troops had killed them after their arrest on May 11 at a checkpoint in Pinabacdao, Samar.

Lt. Col. Jonathan Potot, commanding officer of the 92nd Infantry Battalion, presented Pajes and Fernandez to members of the media on Dec. 26 to

Potot noted that the couple had decided to start life anew. "They deserve a second chance and live normally in their out. I can also assure their personal security," Potot said. (See related story on Page A4.)

On the day they were presented to the media on a side street outside the Tacloban City center, the two admitted that they were active NPA members.

"The report that we were bru-

MISSING 10

JUNIOR INQUIRER
Win tickets to must-see show of the year. Just answer this question: Whose will the Disney on Ice Mickey & Minnie's Amazing Journey be held from Jan. 18 to 22, 2008?

SUNDAY MAGAZINE
Delicious Dozen 12 menus reflect the consistent creativity, passion and dedication of their chefs who can compete with the top of the world.

ENTERTAINMENT /C1
PDI Man in Hollywood reveals Porter Child' almost won international film festival top prize

LIFESTYLE/C1
12 people show their lists of blessings; readers invited to e-mail theirs to lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

EZ1 SIX DIGIT

6 5 8 6 1 0 1 8

SUERTRES

5 9 6 0 5 6

6/42 LUZON-VIS-MIN

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Bomb experts deployed to Bocaue

NBI personnel to inspect firecracker factories and advise manufacturers

WHAT'S INSIDE

- **CHA-CHA EYED** to revive peace talks with MILF /A15
- **US AGENCY** brings cyber ed to RP schools /A15
- **SCOUT RANGERS** in 2006 attempted coup discharged /A5
- **MAKATI GETS** ready for New Year countdown /A8

By Tina G. Santos and Nancy Carvajal

THE NATIONAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION has deployed bomb experts to Bocaue, Bulacan—the country's fireworks capital—to conduct inspections and give pointers to manufacturers and retailers on the proper handling and storage of legal firecrackers and other pyrotechnics.

"We have to orient manufacturers and retailers to avoid firecracker-related fires and accidents that usually claim the lives of people and cause damage to property," said lawyer Romulo Asis, chief of the NBI Anti-Terrorism Division.

Asis said NBI agents were also sent to other places in Bulacan where fireworks are made and sold.

Openly sold in streets

At the developed, Valenzuela police on Friday seized thousands of pesos worth of illegal firecrackers and pyrotechnics being openly sold to the city's streets.

Supt. Reynaldo Duano, Northern Police District intelligence chief, arrested Rogelio Santos II, of Arkong Bato in Valenzuela for possession of at least 5,000 assorted illegal firecrackers.

Duano said the firecrackers were being openly sold in front of Santos' house.

"Although firecrackers are part of the New Year's celebration, they had to be confiscated because aside from their volume, they posed a danger to the people in the area," Duano said.

Santos, for until, yielded dozens of imported firecrackers, super bilo-bilo and giant triangulo.

Santos will be charged with violating Republic Act No. 7183 in the city's prosecutor's office, Duano said.

RA 7183 regulates the sale, manufacture, distribution and use of firecrackers and other pyrotechnic devices. These are usually the giant explosives as opposed to the smaller and less powerful ones that are allowed.

The permits indicate a fine of between P20,000 and P30,000 or imprisonment of between six months and one year, or both at the discretion of the judge.

For additional punishment, the judge could order the cancellation of the license and business permit of the offender.

Testing a bomb shell

On Dec. 11, 2004, seven people were killed when a fire hit a strip of firecracker stalls in Bocaue. The blaze started when a customer asked that a "bomb-shell" be wanted to buy be tested. Sparks flew from the item which turned out to be defective, starting a fire that ate up 14 stalls.

On Dec. 30, 1997, two workers were killed and four others suffered burns in a fire that hit an illegal firecracker factory in San Ildefonso, Bulacan.

Those were among the long list of tragedies involving firecrackers in Bulacan during the Christmas and New Year holiday season.

Optimism

Asis of the NBI expressed optimism the bureau's initiative would help prevent fires and accidents.

At the same time, he gave some pointers on the proper handling and storage of firecrackers and pyrotechnics.

"Those who plan to store such items should place them in plastic rather than metal containers. As much as possible, the firecrackers should be stored at room temperature," he said.

Metal, according to an Explosives Ordnance Disposal expert, is prone to friction that could cause the firecrackers or pyrotechnics to explode.

Firecracker-related incidents are mainly caused by the mishandling of pyrotechnic materials, he said.

For a total ban

But rather than issue the usual warnings and appeals each year, the government should just totally ban fireworks, a senator has proposed.

Senator Miriam defensor Santiago said it is preferred that firecrackers be "absolutely banned" since the authorities cannot stop their proliferation.

"The manufacture, sale and use of firecrackers should be absolutely banned for endangering the lives and limbs of users and bystanders. It's most foolish to simply prepare hospitals for victims of firecracker accidents," Santiago said.

The Department of Health has launched its annual campaign to warn the public against the use of firecrackers during the New Year revelry.

Horns, harmless noise makers

Each year, the DOH appeals to the public to use horns and other harmless noise makers instead of firecrackers to welcome the new year.

Francisco said firecrackers were "very dangerous" because they were made of the same materials as explosives.

Aside from the inherent danger posed by the explosive materials, Francisco said the proliferation of substandard and defective firecrackers added to the number of New Year's injuries and deaths.

Francisco also suggested the government control fireworks displays to specific areas under stewards controlled conditions as is done in some countries.

With Doris Franchequet

Bishops seek review of pardon system for convicts

By Brenda T. Maitem

THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE of the Philippines wants a thorough review of the system for granting pardons to prisoners.

Taking issue with the Arroyo administration's recent grant of clemency to a number of prominent convicts and the recent confusing release of former Sen. Ramon Jabaque, the Episcopal Commission on Prison Pastoral Care of the CBCP is calling for a way to "level the playing field" when it comes to granting pardons.

ECPPC executive director Rudy Diamante said in an interview the system should include consultations with the community and the prisoners, and not just rely on the decision of the President.

Diamante said it should also take in consideration not just the age of the prisoner but the effect of "restorative justice" on him or her.

Restorative justice, in the social doctrine of the Church, refers to justice capable of restoring harmony in social relations, which was disrupted by the criminal act committed by the prisoner.

"We hope they won't just rely on the age of the person, if he's 70 or sick. His character should also be considered on whether he can go back to the community or not," Diamante said.

He said the system for granting pardons should also be reviewed to keep it free of political considerations.

"I believe it is the grant of a pardon will always be political. There has to be a thorough review of our pardon system," Diamante said.

"It is political now because, for example, why of all prisoners, Jalosjos received a commutation [of sentence]? It is the common prisoners who are suffering despite being equally eligible for a pardon," he said.

Diamante said the President had not properly explained why she commuted Jalosjos' sentence to 10 years from a double life term.

GMA: Gov't doing its best to keep prices in check

By Michael Lim Ubac

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO YESTERday said the government was working doubly hard to mitigate the impact of a possible rise in the prices of basic commodities as a result of the high international price of oil.

The President made the assurance in response to reports that crude oil was being traded up to $97 per barrel in Asia—the highest level in a month—following the assassination of Pakistan's popular opposition leader Benazir Bhutto.

"We will work hard to protect the people from the high prices of basic commodities," the President said in a speech during the Christmas visit of Santiago town in Ilocos Sur where she distributed Christmas packages to indigent children.

The President told the town's residents the economy was stable as a result of the favorable measures being implemented, the peso remained strong, the stock market was bullish and investments continued to grow.

World oil dealers fear Bhutto's assassination on Thursday night, which plunged Pakistan into crisis and sparked concerns about global security, would have a psychological impact on the market even though Pakistan is not an oil producer.

President Arroyo said she was not bothered by this development as her administration remained focused on the delivery of the fruits of the economic and fiscal reform measures that have brought in huge revenues to the national treasury.

She said the tasks of her administration for 2008 are to improve vital infrastructure projects in the urban and rural areas, attract more foreign investment, improve and revitalize the educational system, and deliver more health services to indigent families.

When she learned that most of the indigent families in Santiago were not receiving health care benefits, Ms Arroyo instructed presidential adviser Alex Macadaeg to help them acquire Philippine Health Insurance (PhilHealth) cards.

She said her administration would work harder in 2008 to further improve the country's fiscal position and economic performance and make sure that the benefits of economic progress would be delivered to people's doorsteps in the next three years.

DFA rues closure of Swedish outpost

THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS last week said it was "deeply concerned" over the decision of the Swedish government to close its embassy in Manila at a time when relations between the two countries were "flourishing."

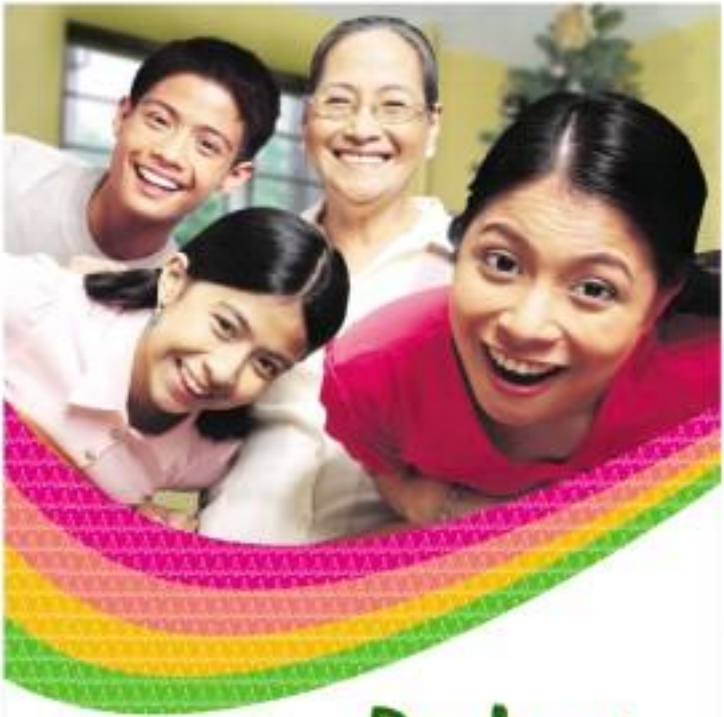
In a statement, Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo made the assurance "that the Philippine Embassy in Stockholm will continue to strengthen the bridges of friendship and partnership" between the two countries.

Romulo noted that Sweden's decision to close its embassy came at a time when "our bilateral trade is growing, our investments are increasing and our tourism exchanges are rising."

Last week, Sweden announced it was closing its embassy in Manila effective June 30 next year "to the latest."

It said that after the closure, applications for visas to Sweden would be handled by another country's embassy in Manila. It did not say which embassy this would be.

A statement posted on the Swedish Embassy website said the closure was part of the Swedish foreign ministry's "continuous review of its organization abroad" and that the process "sometimes leads to Sweden opening new or closing existing embassies and consulates."



Paskong Panalo

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UP TO 70% OFF

Erap eyes new Palace run if opposition not united

From page A1

election group.

"The first option is to find a way to unite the four to six presidential aspirants ... It's too early anyway," Maceda said.

He (Estrada) did say that to a situation wherein all five will run, (Estrada himself running) is an option ... (It's) a definite deduction that if he does run, all the five presidential aspirants will tally behind him," said Maceda, one of 1987's prime movers in the last senatorial election.

Maceda said he had talked to retired Chief Justice Andres Narganbayan and was told that the pardon given Estrada was absolute and unconditional.

Does this mean Estrada can run again?

"That's the implication," Maceda said.

Rodolfo Elizalditad, Mr Arroyo's legal counsel on election concerns, begged to differ.

"He cannot run again, not because of the pluralist case, but because under the Constitution, no person who had been elected previous to his election to the same position," Elizalditad said.

He said Estrada could run for any other elective position—barangay captain, senator or vice president.

Only through succession

He said Estrada could still become president but only through succession.

"If he runs for vice president and wins, and the president-elect steps down, then he (president through succession, not through election," Elizalditad said.

He agreed with the observation that the Arroyo's pardon of Estrada effat he was convicted of plunder was unconditional.

"Yes, people are saying that Erap may be brought back to prison because he would be violating the condition of his pardon by running. There's nothing to violate because there's no condition," Elizalditad said.

Opposition split in '04

Reported to have declared that he could still run for president after being pardoned of his plunder conviction, Estrada said he didn't mean a repeat of the 2004 election.

Newsweek Tue seen has his head was far from overwhelming. That's why he was elected of his victory," Estrada said, referring to his June 2004 win and fellow actor who ran for president in 2004.

Opposition split in '04

Estrada noted that the anti-Arroyo votes were split between opposition Senator Lacson also as he got almost a tally of three million votes. "If he did not run, the opposition would have won," he said.

Pension Mauzgagal-Arroyo was declared the winner of the 2004 presidential election, ending an total of about a million votes over her strongest rival, Poe.

Other presidential candidates, Raul Roco and evangelist Bro. Eddie Villanueva, also ran into the unit Arroyo votes.

Estrada initially said that he had yet to make plans for running again for the top elective post. "Right now, I have no plans," Estrada told the reporters.

Asked if he would change his mind in the near future, he said it would depend on the opposition failing to field a standard-bearer.

The Sandiganbayan pronounced Estrada guilty of plunder and sentenced him up to 40 years in prison on Sept. 12.

He was convicted for his encouragement of PAGCOR boss in illegal gambling payoffs and his receipt of a P189-mil-lion commission from stock market purchases using state pension funds.

On Oct. 25, Mr Arroyo pardoned Estrada, saving him from his imprisonment.

He was impeached in November 2000 and driven out of Malacañang by a people power uprising two months later.

Supreme Court to decide

Told of the constitutional ban on elected presidents running again for the office, Maceda said: "The Supreme Court will be the one that will decide that."

"And may I add that (retired) Chief Justice Panganiban told me that (the issue on the constitutional ban) can go either way. There are good arguments for both (sides)," he said.

Estrada said the electoral clamors on his concession democracy, particularly the part in which the Arroyo administration recognized that he would no longer run for public office, were "not binding."

"Even in the Philippine popular constitution (It's the dispositive portion that counts)," Estrada said.

Estrada said Ms Arroyo has still failed to keep her word when she announced on Dec. 30, 2005 that she was not running in 2004.

Trembling at the thought?

"She even made the statement on Rizal Day. Still, she ran," Estrada said.

"Now that dispositive portion of his pardon said that his political (and civil) rights were restored.

"I have the right to vote and to be voted on," Estrada said.

"I voted in the barangay election. Why didn't they complain?" he said. "What's all the fuss on my running again for president? Are they trembling at the thought?"

Maceda said Estrada's candidacy may only be questioned when he files his certificate of candidacy at the Commission on Elections (Comelec).

He said the Comelec would first hear the protest against his candidacy and its decision is expected to be contested in the Supreme Court.

Maceda said he expects such a case to take its normal course at the Comelec and the Supreme Court, and it would probably only be a few days from the elections before the Supreme Court could decide.

SC to wait for poll results

"I posed a question separately to Chief Justice Panganiban. I asked him: 'Will the Supreme Court decide the case (on Estrada's running again for president) a few days before the elections?' Maceda said.

"He said the Supreme Court would not decide. They will just wait for the elections to finish," the former senator said.

With the electorate voting for Estrada? "That's correct," Maceda said.

BLESSINGS ON SANTA'S TICKET? Pardoned convict Joseph Estrada distributes gift bags on Saturday to the residents of Payatas and of North Triangle in Quezon City. (PHOTO BY NIÑO JESUS ORBETA)

Erap can run for other posts but not for president

By Beverly T. Mendoza

DEPOSED PRESIDENT Joseph Estrada is barred by the Constitution from running for the presidency in 2010, a poll commissioner said yesterday.

"My legal position is he has served his one term as president, although he was not able to complete it. Therefore, he is barred by the Constitution from being elected to another term," said Election Commissioner Resurreccion Borra.

Since the adoption of the 1987 Constitution, former presidents are not allowed to run for another term, said Sarmiento, a member of the 1986 Constitutional Commission that drafted the Constitution.

Sarmiento said that while the government had removed Estrada's political and civil rights, which include the right to vote and to be elected, the constitutional ban still applied to him as a president who had completed a full term.

Not barred

"He may vote but he may not be elected for the position of president in 2010," said Sarmiento.

Estrada, however, is not barred by law from running for other positions, he said.

No election law can stop Estrada from seeking other public positions because the constitutional ban only applies to the presidency.

Ex-ABS-CBN news team holds reunion, talks about the good ole' days

From page A1

Grill on Timog Avenue, Quezon City, just a stone's throw away from the offices of their network GMA 7.

During the reunion, the unavailable was discussed—the ratings and network war between ABS-CBN and GMA 7.

It all started when former senior reporter Cornelio Valdez sniffed off a black T-shirt with the ABS-CBN News logo in front and printed on the back were these words: "NO ABS-CBN news? mmm, this type feels different."

Many of those in Attendance shouted: "Hu oyo! Ano 'to. I miss more at working dung kaka-hiri (We were different because we were No. 1 then and we had no competition)!"

A-list

Attending the informal dinner and get-together were Vice President Noli "Kabayan" de Castro who was the original anchor of TV Patrol, former Press Secretary and former vice president for ABS-CBN News and Current Affairs Ted T. Boyle, former Press Undersecretary and original director of TV Patrol Ted "Dr. World Tonight" Failon and Radyo Bandi top announcer Lito Bulgado Jr., former Rep. Gilbert Remulla, Angelique Lazo, Rafa Siguion-Reyna, Rhoda and Becky Cabral.

The reunion had to ask the invitable. Why was there no question about ABS-CBN's dominance in audience share then, whereas now it has to defend its dominance to the ratings game?

From scratch

Valdez also shared that every time GMA 7 got first crack at an exclusive story or interview, old-timers in the ABS-CBN newsroom would just sigh and even years after many of them had severed ties with the giant network.

"It's because we saw how ABS-CBN started from scratch and overtook the giant even if its viewers and it's not the same anymore," Valdez said.

He added that the old newsroom was a real family that genuinely cared for each other.

There was no backbiting, no cyclo war, no politicking, he said. "Right now, I have no plans," Estrada told the reporters.

Valdez was among the batch of senior reporters who were forced to resign upon the entry of a new News and Current Affairs group led by Maria Ressa.

From zero

Boyet, fondly called "Tito Boy" recalled that the success of the old ABS-CBN News and Public Affairs team was "sweet" because "we all started from zero, earning our stripes as we handled years of challenges and hardships."

Bandila said in jest, "ABS-CBN News then was No. 1 because the competition was lagpy (sing No. 3."

Jay Sonza, who was one of the brains behind the original TV Patrol, said: "The exclusive teller of the old newsroom that made ABS-CBN a success is now in executives."

Sonza, however, failed to reveal the get-together.

It's not about ratings

The old-timers said they dream of once again seeing the glory days of ABS-CBN, when delivering the news was not about ratings.

Sambo Simbao, former producer for the Rapid Deployment Unit (RDU) of the network, said it would happen if the current bosses and Current Affairs group would work as a team, celebrate and learn time and effort in building resources and contacts.

"Tayo'y to say para kapag nanood ng news tayo'y, nag papabanggaan lang or other ng motivated (pati, hindi rabid news na sasama ban ang Bayo, may kaukayan, hindi dobl ac may panonong tungon na Pilipino ang news. Kasi ang nangyayari, the networks are just trying to one do each other and the audience loses this. In the past, when you were first with the news it was because you worked hard, you had good contacts, not because there was a price agreement)."

Hurt pride

Simbao said the was hurt by the fact that the pride of the ABS-CBN News of yesteryear was no more.

"They can display this pero alam ng mga old-timers na mahirap ang problema nila sa food, nalagpag kaya sila and nawa'y ma-ka it is about the people, the work force that they have now. Hindi nasa ratings, hindi nasa pa-ni; tapusan, nasa tono, kaya ang pamunita sa event (The old-timers know there is a major internal problem. In this year, the people in high positions should look out to those in the lower positions. But now, the people in the lower positions should be the ones to reach out to those up there)," Simbao said.

The dinner was also attended by employees, on-site talents and production staff who are still with ABS-CBN.

And the winner is ...

And at the gathering of current and former colleagues, another uncontrived piece of news surfaced. To supposedly solve the day, another old-timer might stutter a comeback statement soon.

The winner is ...

A network employee said, "Subukit ito si Doug (Doug is coming back)," referring to former Press Secretary and ABS-CBN vice president for News and Current Affairs Ricardo Puno Jr.

Will Puno's comeback make a difference? What will happen to the new batch of news executives headed by Ressa?

Bungee (they mused). For now, it's just "small talk and news."

Incidentally, GMA 7's March Raquel was also there, being a former ABS-CBN executive.

The night of the get-together was capped by a photo-op, with almost everyone in attendance smiling for the camera and shouting: "We are No. 1!"

"WE'RE DIFFERENT." In the rolling top of former bastions of the ABS-CBN newsroom when it's executives and news team of old hold a reunion at Forest Grill Restaurant on Timog Avenue, Quezon City. At center of souvenir photo is Vice President Noli de Castro, himself a distinguished alumnus of the giant network's newsroom. (PHOTO BY TED T. BOYLE)

5 Scout Rangers in '06 attempted coup axed

By Nikko Dizon

FIVE ARMY SCOUT RANGERS WERE dishonorably discharged on Christmas Day for their alleged participation in the February 2006 attempted coup, a military spokesperson said Friday.

Lt. Col. Ernesto Torres said the discharge order, signed by Army chief Lt. Gen. Alexander Yano, was dated Dec. 24 but was released only on Dec. 27.

The five had been detained in the Army stockade in Camp Capinpin in Tanay, Rizal, for over a year.

No details yet

Torres said he had yet to read the investigation report and thus could not give details of the discharge.

The five were detained since July last year but the investigation of their participation in the attempt to grab power from President Macapagal-Arroyo by, among others, their commander, Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim, began only on Dec. 9 this year.

Sgt. Orlando Sibonan, Corporals Pfcs Francisco, Ramon Dennis Jr. and Reynaldo Pareja, and Pfc. Leon Omar Jr. left Tanay yesterday and are on their way to their respective hometowns.

Gold Cross awardee

Pareja is a Gold Cross recipient for his part in the conquest of Camp Abubakar, the Abu Sayyaf camp in Basilan, in 2000 that resulted in the release of a number of the Basilan group's hostages.

All five served in a unit led by Scout Ranger Capt. Sutton Unlendley, who is himself detained in Camp Capinpin along with 27 other detained Marine and Ranger officers including former Marine commandant Maj. Gen. Renato Miranda, Marine Col. Ariel Querubin and Lim.

Lim was transferred to Camp Crame yesterday from Camp Aguinaldo, both in Quezon City, for his participation in the Peninsula Manila hotel takeover on Nov. 29 where he again called for the ouster of President Arroyo along with Navy officer turned senator Antonio Trillanes IV.

48 detained

Without conducting a formal investigation, the Army detained 40 Scout Rangers suspected of being on the 2006 coup plot.

Of the number, 26 were dismissed from the service in October and another nine were reportedly let go last month.

Torres said that following the investigation, the nine soldiers were reprimanded and have been assigned to Army Headquarters Support Command in Taguig City.

Two of the nine have applied for discharge, Torres said.

With the reprimand, the soldiers will not be promoted or allowed to undergo schooling for a year, Torres said.

In 3 years, the soldiers will undergo training in civil military operations, he said.

WASTONG PAGKAIN, ABOT-KAYANG BILHIN

NFA Rice	P18.25	Rice Premium	P27-30
		Rice Fancy	P30-45
		Bangus	P70-90
		Tilapia	P80-90
Regular Well Milled	P23-25	Galunggong	P80-120
Well Milled Rice	P22-29	Kamatis	P40-60
		Pechay	P20-45
		Sitaw	P40-60
		Talong	P28-60

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Pakistan gov't says Bhutto killed by bump in head

From page A1

killed when she tried to duck back into the armored vehicle during the attack, and the shock waves from the blast smashed her head into a lever attached to the armored car, fracturing her skull.

He showed reporters a videotape of the attack, which showed Bhutto waving, smiling and chatting with supporters from the moonroof as her vehicle sat maneuvering on the street outside the rally. Three gunshots rang out, the sunroof appeared to fall and the video, which Cheema said was filmed by authorities, then stopped.

Transcript

Denying charges the government failed to give her adequate security protection, Cheema said it was Bhutto who made herself vulnerable and pointed out that the other parties inside Bhutto's armored car "had stopped" when she "was told to stop."

"I wish she had not come out of the cordon of her vehicle," he said.

Army in the streets

Bhutto, who was twice prime minister of Pakistan, was laid to rest at her ancestral village to the southern Dikhnari province of Sindh on Friday in a ceremony attended by thousands of mourners as well by her furious supporters, who poured across the country leaving more than 50 people dead.

The government sent the army into the streets on Saturday in quell the frenzy of violence, with orders to shoot on sight.

Army, police and paramilitary troops patrolled the mostly deserted streets of Bhutto's home city of Larkana on Saturday, passing the shells of burned cars on the side of the road. Overnight looting there left shopkeepers at a jewelry market unarmed.

Bhutto's party flags, portraits of her and signs welcoming her hung from wholesale pylons. Dozens of her grieving supporters gathered, in other prayers at various places throughout the city.

Serious danger

Bhutto's death and the ensuing violence raised concerns that their current interim government, plagued by chaos and the growing threat from Islamic militants even before the killing, was in danger of spiraling out of control.

The government blamed Bhutto's killing on al-Qaeda militants operating with increasing impunity in the lawless tribal areas along the border with Afghanistan and said it would hunt down those responsible for her death.

"They will definitely be brought to justice," said Interior Ministry spokesperson Javed Iqbal Cheema.

'Spectacular job'

The government released a statement Friday of a purported conversation between militant leader Baitullah Mehsud and another militant.

"It was a spectacular job. They were very brave boys who killed her," Mehsud said according to the transcript.

MOURNING BY THE GRAVESIDE IN THE SHUTTLE MAUSOLEUM are Benazir Bhutto's children Bilawal (center) daughters Bakhtawar (right), Aseifa (2nd right) and Bhutto's younger sister Sanam Bhutto. (3rd left). — AFP

Cheema described Mehsud as an al-Qaeda leader who was at an Islamic conference in Karachi's Binnori Town in October against Bhutto that killed more than 140 people and took other hostage in one of a series of attacks in Pakistan.

Mehsud is thought to be the commander of pro-Taliban forces in the tribal region of South Waziristan, where al-Qaeda fighters are also active.

In the transcript, Mehsud goes by teacher as Maliz, a town in South Waziristan.

This fall, he was quoted in a Pakistani newspaper as saying that he would welcome Bhutto's return from exile with suicide bombers to attack her motorcade that is unannounced to local television and newspaper reporters.

Sherry Rehman reported Cheema that Mehsud was behind the attack, saying the suit, tunic—through unanimous—had previously told Bhutto he was not involved in the Karachi bombing.

"The story that al-Qaida or Baitullah Mehsud did it appears to me to be calculated victory on intended story because they wanted to divert the attention," said Rehman Malik Imbar, a spokesperson for Bhutto's party.

Babar said Bhutto had earlier told the government of "elements" other than al-Qaeda that she thought could be a threat to her, but officials never investigated.

2 probes

Cheema announced the formation of two inquiries into Bhutto's death, one to be carried out by a high court judge and another by security forces.

About half a dozen police investigators called through reinforcement and took measurements Saturday morning at the scene of the shooting and bombing as well as debris in the garbage can at Rawalpindi that also killed 20 people. More than a dozen officers disarmed traffic and provided security for the investigators.

Bhutto's death plunged the nation deep into turmoil has shaken world leaders and sent monetary shockwaves and sparked deadly rioting that killed at least 27 people, according to an interior ministry official who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media.

Desperate to quell the violence, the government sent troops into the streets of Hyderabad, Karachi and other areas in Sindh province. In Hyderabad, the soldiers ordered to kill people out of their homes, witnesses said.

Paramilitary rangers were also given the authority to use live fire to stop rioters from damaging property in the region, said Brig. Asad Ali, the rangers' spokesman.

Election on

Prime Minister Shokaumat Aziz Shaukat said the government had no immediate plans to postpone the Jan. 8 parliamentary elections, despite the violence and the decision by Nawaz Sharif, another opposition leader, to boycott the polls.

"Right now the elections stand where they were," he told a news conference.

The United States, which sees Pakistan as a crucial ally in the war on terror, was consulting on President Pervez Musharraf to proceed with the vote in the hope it will reinstate steps toward restoring democracy after the six-week state of emergency he declared last month.

Sharif's death left her popular party without a clear successor. Her husband, Asif Ali Zardari, who was freed in December 2004 after eight years in prison on charges of monetary violations and sparked deadly rioting that killed at least 27 people, according to an interior ministry official who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media.

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Burial rites

While many grieving Pakistanis turned to violence, hundreds of thousands of others paid their last respects Friday to the popular opposition leader.

Throughout the day, hundreds of thousands of mourners arrived in Bhutto's ancestral home of Garhi Khuda Bakhsh in trucks, buses, cars and jeeps for her funeral ceremony and burial.

Bhutto's plain wood coffin, draped in the red, green and black flag of her political party, Pakistan's People's Party, was carried in a white ambulance toward the marble mausoleum, about five kilometers away, passing shouting passengers train on the way.

Many of the mourners threw petals into the air as the ambulance, with Bhutto's four children and other family members, passed by.

Men lined the roads and ran alongside the ambulance, many of them weeping openly. Women beat their heads and chests in grief.

An imam led the mourners in prayers and Bhutto's son, Bilawal, and her widowed husband helped lift the coffin into the grave, beside those of her father, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, another popular former prime minister who also met a violent death.

So long as the moon and sun are alive, so is the name of Bhutto," supporters chanted. AP with AFP

Oxford friends remember 'fiery, fun' glamorous personality

From page A1

she have parties at Oxford, dance a jet, law 80s sports car and described her university years, featuring typical student pastimes like punting on the river Cherwell, as the best of her life.

Bhutto studied politics, philosophy and economics at Lady Margaret Hall from 1973 to 1976 and later became an honorary fellow of the college, which was founded in 1878 and pioneered in women's education at Oxford.

Sports car, nice dresses

She was very charismatic," Mrinalini Sebadduka, another friend living instead of Bhutto who met her at Oxford, recounted.

"We were a dusk lot of 1970s students, messy and not very well-off ... and there was this exotic woman who drove a sports car when we mostly rode bicycles and had lots of friends."

Sebadduka, who later settled in Australia, said Bhutto's father, subtly, enjoyed the times but she liked socializing as well, she liked parties and wore big nice dresses."

Alan Greene, business spokesperson for the main opposition Conservative Party, knew Bhutto for 31 years and was her campaign manager when she became Oxford University president in 1976.

Their friendship continued after they left university and the pair exchanged e-mails a few days before her death in which he pledged to visit Pakistan as was her being sworn in as prime minister.

From Harvard

"She was fiery and fun, a very dominant personality," he said.

"She had been to Harvard already so she was a little bit older than the rest of us ... she was enormously determined."

The principal of Lady Margaret Hall, Dame Fiona Caroline Kennon, said Bhutto "signalled" by Bhutto's assassination, adding, "She was highly regarded as an intelligent student who made many friends here."

Duncan said that Bhutto's father, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, alongside whom the assassinated opposition leader said former prime minister was founded Friday, was ousted from office weeks after she was voted into the prestigious role.

This prompted a series of protests in the university involving students and academics alike, he said.

'Transformed by father's death'

"Throughout all of that year in which she had been president, there were campaigns, meetings around Oxford," he said.

But he said it was her father's hanging in 1979 under the regime of military dictator General Zia-ul-Haq which propelled her to become political opposition."

Decision," He added, "but to on a similar then, aren't you?"

Another Oxford contemporary, author Tariq Ali, echoed this view, writing in the Guardian newspaper: "She was not a natural politician and had always resented to be it, dislocate, but history and personal tragedy pushed her into the role/ direction.

"Her father's death transformed her."

Memorial

The Oxford Union announced that it would build a debater in Bhutto's memory on Jan. 17 entitled, "This house believes that the ideal state is a secular state."

In text its condolences to her family, "at this awful time." AFP

WORST CRISIS IN PAKISTAN'S MODERN HISTORY: The assassination of former PM Benazir Bhutto has triggered nationwide violence that had reportedly killed more than 20 people as of press time. The government has called in the armed forces to assist in controlling the law and order situation. —

Missing activist couple released ...

From page A1

tally killed and, in my case, raped, was far from the truth," said 30-year-old Fernandez, who gave birth to a baby boy on Nov. 21.

He said that during their stay inside the camp of the 62nd Infantry Battalion, which is based in Calbiga, Samar, Pedro and his aunt treated them kindly although, for the first two months, they were held separately.

Substantial information

It was during this time that the military obtained "substantial information" from the couple, Ponce said.

He said that, among other things, they were able to learn the strength, both in manpower and firearms, of the South Samar Front Committee 1 and 2 that operates in the province under a certain "Ka Boling."

Fernandez, who is a native of Dolog, Leyte, but lived in Metro Manila, was the education chair of the Samar Front Committee 1, according to the military. She was involved in mass organization and social-welfare activities.

Her common-law husband, Pajarito, 29, was a full-time NPA member, under the South Samar Front Committee 2, the military said.

Days after their arrest, the National Democratic Front, the political arm of the CPP and some human rights groups in the region claimed through a statement that the two had been tortured, raped in the case of Fernandez) and brutally killed by soldiers of the 62nd IB.

The military arrested Fernandez and Pajarito at around 9 a.m. on May 11 when the two they were riding in were stopped at a checkpoint in Barangay Bolong, Calbiga town in Samar.

The military alleged that the two and their companions were on their way to the city of Catbalogan to collect permit-to-campaign fees from certain politicians. They were brought to the 62nd IB.

Weeks from being turned in the air of warfare, members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines are also trained as sons and daughters of God. We respect and value the rights of an individual," Ponce said.

The two, who were college students before they joined the movement, said they would try their best to raise his in Manila for the sake of their baby.

Fernandez, eldest of three siblings from a working class family in Mandaluyong City, was a journalism and sociology student at Polytechnic University of the Philippines in Manila.

Campus paper editor

She wrote for and edited the PUP campus paper, The Catalyst, and was active in the University of the College Editors Guild of the Philippines.

She joined the women's group Gabriela in 1997 and was elected secretary general of Gabriela Youth. She later became an organizer for the Kilusang Sambayan Federation of Peasant Women in Cavite.

Where she disappeared, her distraught parents sought the assistance of various militant groups and church. Bed their daughter, in June, when finding mission was conducted by Karapatan and Gabriela to search for the couple.

The team visited police stations in the province as well as the headquarters of the 62nd IB in Calbiga and of the 801st Infantry Brigade in Hinabangan town.

Officials they talked to denied having custody of the couple but refused to issue a certification to that effect.

On the 14, Gabriela launched a protest action to focus of Camp Aguinaldo to demand that the military release Fernandez.

Too afraid to testify

Karapatan had difficulty pursuing legal remedies in seeking the couple's release or at least have the Army to acknowledge having the couple in its custody—because residents who had witnessed the abduction and saw the couple being transferred to various locations allegedly by soldiers were too afraid to testify.

It filed petition habeas with the couple, identified only as Jigoy, managed to escape and revealed to Karapatan-Eastern Visayas that they were arrested by being suspected NPA members.

Tortured

Jigoy had recounted how he, Fernandez and Pajarito were detained in separate but adjacent quarters at the camp of the 62nd IB, and were interrogated and tortured by turns for eight days. He said his hands were tied and he was hung for two days, while being denied food and water.

Jigoy also said Juliet was raped while her husband was handcuffed and forced to watch.

However, before he could execute an affidavit, Jigoy again disappeared and efforts to locate him failed, Gabriela have reported.

Militants welcome release of activist couple but ...

By Jerome Aning

MILITANT GROUPS YESTERday welcomed the release of activists Juliet Fernandez and her common-law husband Manuel Pajarito, but were skeptical of the couple's initial statements that appeared to be sympathetic to the military.

The couple had been missing for several months after allegedly being abducted by soldiers in Samar.

Fernandez and Pajarito were "surfaced" by the 62nd Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army in Catbalogan City, the human rights group Karapatan said.

"We're surprised by the statements made by Fernandez and Pajarito that they were treated kindly. Their public pronouncements by the military has all the hallmarks of a staged or sanitized play," said Karapatan secretary general Marie Hilao-Enriquez.

Fernandez and Pajarito had gone to Eastern Samar to organize Saludsod in the Bonbong Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalayang ng Pilipinas.

'Publicity stunt'

Karapatan-Eastern Visayas regional coordinator Allyssa Quijano said the couple's release was a "publicity stunt." He called on the military to stop treating the two as "trophies" and to remove them from Army custody so that they may freely speak to the media.

Quijano said Fernandez was supposed to launch the "Kusaan ng Juliet Fernandez and Jigoy" campaign drive in January to speed up efforts to find her and encourage witnesses to come out.

"She has attended our national congress as a delegate of our local chapter. Despite that, we encountered no opposition during the military against prior fabrication in Eastern Visayas," he told the lawyers.

Enriquez said the forum shows Pajarito's "panic" clearly when he said the military, specifically the 62nd IB, is experiencing the drastically act of disappearance, illegal arrests and detention contrary to what government functionaries called a president who condemned and reiterates them, have pertained that they are not resolved in any of those crimes on hapless civilians."

Quijano said Fernandez was determined to file cases of illegal arrest and detention of killing against the soldiers responsible.

In November, the human rights-related Fernandez's parents, Roberto and Grisera, who were married for their daughter's safety and health, since Fernandez had said in a text message that she was going soon.

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GMA leads Rizal 111th anniversary rites in La Union

By Michael Lim Ubac

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO will lead today's nationwide commemoration of the 111th anniversary of the martyrdom of Jose Rizal when she attends a flag-raising ceremony at the national hero in San Fernando City in La Union.

For inspiring an "oppressed nation to eventually break free of three hundred years of Spanish domination," Rizal was executed by a firing squad on various charges, including Rizal Park in Manila, as well as Cuenca, Batangas, in Calamba, Laguna; Dapitan City, Zamboanga City and Davao City.

Mr Arroyo will be given full military honors complete with 21-gun salute by Philippine Military Academy cadets upon her arrival at Camp Oscar Florendo in San Fernando.

The President will be welcomed by La Union Gov. Manuel Ortega, Congressman Victor Ortega and Butch Dumpit, San Fernando City mayor Pablo Ortega, National Historical Institute (NHI) executive director Ludivino Badoy and Armed Forces of the Philippines Chief of Staff Hermogenes Esperon Jr., among other officials.

Wreath for a hero

After the arrival honors, the President will proceed to the San Fernando plaza to lead the flag-raising ceremony, assisted by the La Union governor, the two congressmen, the city mayor and the NHI executive director.

The President will then lay a wreath at the Rizal memorial shrine.

The theme for this year's celebration is "Isulong at Ipagtanggol ang Pagkamalaya ng Kabuyangkatan at Edad."

The President, along with her husband Jose Miguel Arroyo and children Evangeline and Rep. Diosdado Arroyo, flew to Baguio City from Manila at noon yesterday. Rep. Jose Miguel Arroyo said his family will catch up with the First Family in the Pines City today.

Back to Baguio

The occasion is doubly significant for the First Family since it's the first time the President's husband has returned to the city after delicate heart surgery in April.

By nightfall last Easter Sunday, the President's husband was rushed to a hospital in Baguio where he was diagnosed to be suffering from pericarditis. Days later, he underwent high-risk surgery in Manila for a life-threatening heart disease—a disturbing acute aneurysm.

He has since recovered from the surgery, traveling to Hong Kong and lately accompanying Mr Arroyo on her visits to France, Spain and the United Kingdom.

Also in the past, the First Family will spend New Year's Eve in Mansion House, the presidential summer palace, and return to Malacañang on Jan. 2.

Earlier, the President issued Administrative Order No. 214 declaring the 108-d as the legal agency for it to organize programs and activities in the observance of the significant event," Mr Arroyo said when she signed AO 214 on Dec. 17.

She authorized the Department of Budget and Management to release P2 million, sourced from the 2004 regular budget of the NHI under the General Appropriations Act of 2005, and from other savings to defray the expenses for the 2005 activities.

Meanwhile, the NHI announced the holding of "the avenue of Rizal Statues today at 8 a.m. at Plaza de Armas, Fort Santiago, Intramuros, Manila. NHI chair Ambeth Ocampo will deliver the lecture.

Vice President Noli de Castro and Senate President Franklin Drilon are expected to attend the two events.

Lecture on Rizal

"The entire country will be commemorating this momentous occasion and the NHI is the agency best fit to organize programs and activities in the observance of the significant event," Mr Arroyo said when she signed AO 214 on Dec. 17.

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Battle-tested Marines guard monument 14 hours a day

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Jose Rizal, whose martyrdom in 1896 is being marked today.

"When I saw an elementary school in Oriental Mindoro, I thought I'd only see the third monument so far. But I ended up seeing a total of a hundred [monuments]. I thought I'd be rounding right by it one day so no longer guard," said M. Sgt. Aurelio Ibáñez, 46, who was on guard duty at the Rizal monument in Luneta Park for six years.

"When all the stores have fallen after 6 o'clock, only three will remain standing at Luneta—the statue of Rizal and his two Filipino honor guards," Mayor said, recalling a quote attributed to the late journalist Teodoro Valencia.

Natural landmark

Attracting hundreds of tourists every day, the monument—a national landmark along Roxas Boulevard in Manila—was erected 17 years after Rizal's execution by the country's 31st Spanish colonial governor.

A masterpiece in bronze and granite designed by Swiss Dr. Richard Kissling, it stands near the spot where Rizal died by facing squad. Across the monument is the marker for "Km. 0," the starting point for the country's road networking system.

The Rizal monument is the only statue in the Philippines provided with an honor guard for decades, guarding it has been a role exclusively given to corporals and sergeants of the Marine Security and Escort Group (MSEG), mostly soldiers with at least a year or two of combat experience against Moro separatists or communist insurgents.

Marines' 'show window'

This unique security detail gives the troopers a sense of pride apart from the value entrusted to their battlefield.

"We [choose] the most qualified to be on duty at the monument. They have to be at least 5'6" in height—of medium build, and must have a military bearing. They have to be snappy," MSEG deputy group commander Lt. Col. Nestor Acosta said.

For this, the MSEG has been considered the Marines' "show window" for elegance and poise, Acosta said.

"It is an honor to be posted that I am given the chance and honor to be a guard of our national hero," said S/Sgt. Leonilo Enoc, 38, who has been a Rilal sentry for a year now.

Many, the most senior of MSEG's 22-member Escort Company, said honor guards have been posted at the monument as far back as the '60s.

The Marines have a standing agreement with the National Parks Development Committee and the Philippine Tourism Authority to provide security at the Rizal shrine. The guards also stand watch within the area of responsibility of the Manila Police district, headquarters in nearby Ermita, Ilalang Maralo Bay.

Thrills, challenges

Sec. S/Sgt. Armando Caneos, a homebuilder 18 years younger who is now on his ninth year as a Rizal honor guard, believes there's a simpler reason the Marines get the Luneta assignment: "The higher command knows we do this seriously."

The job may be miles away from the frontlines, but guarding Dr. Rizal, even only in two-and-a-half-hour shifts, poses its own set of thrills and challenges.

Several pairs of blanks, bearing M1 Garand rifles, take turns from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. For much of the shift, the guards stand a five-pace report facing each other in "parade rest" formation.

To break the monotony, the highly trained drill sergeants would at times march around the monument. When "in the round," they perform close-hand maneuvers with their rifles.

Rifle exhibition

"After about an hour or 90 minutes [into the shift], we would go around to do a rifle exhibition, especially when there are many people to see," said Caneodoc.

The style of spinning Garands often attracts tourists to see the crowd-pleasers.

"Visitors would sometimes request us to be photographed with them, so we oblige. But that's only for the outgoing guards. The incoming guards are not allowed to do that because they have to proceed to their post," Enoc said.

"Most foreigners show respect and bow in front of the monument. That's why it's frustrating at times when there are some Filipinos who, mostly students, who yell or say, 'Dr. Rizal! Is already dead.' Why are you still guarding him?" Caneos has told the laymen in Filipino.

"Others do silly things just to distract you. They wave their hands in front of your eyes. Minsan [sometimes] they dance on the ground in front of you," he said.

The worst reaction some give them "the dirty finger" or hurl expletives. Some even throw stones at the debonaire guards.

The Marines, as part of their discipline, should never retaliate. But when the hardships become too and begins to actually harm the guards, a back-up Marine in civilian clothes moves in to "parade rest" formation.

AFTER A STORM, ONLY 2 REMAIN STANDING IN LUNETA. "Only the most qualified Marines are chosen as the national hero's honor guards at his 94-year-old monument at Rizal Park in the Luneta. MARIO ALVAREZ

Security cordon

Many said a security cordon providing a "safe" distance between guards and spectators was finally installed sometime after an incident in 1999, when an honor guard was slapped by a peek-a-boo and was thrown off balance.

"It was around 11 a.m. and his partner was not at his post. The Marine was by himself and then was this visitor—a student...physically attacking him. He responded by hitting him with his rifle," Mayor said.

"The student went to the police to complain, but the police did not press charges because they knew that a Marine honor guard would not have acted that way if he hadn't been provoked, if he'd hit a visitor other than fending back," Mayor said.

No talking

Honor honor guards are strictly prohibited from talking to each other so to park visitors, or to make unnecessary gestures. They cannot just casually leave their posts without proper business or assistance between shifts.

But what's the protocol when nature calls? Simple: They just have to hold it in for a while.

"With the kind of training we have, within those two and a half hours on the shift we don't easily get hours. Otherwise, we will just get through the duty at Luneta," said Caneodoc.

Of course, Rizal's guards also have their share of "fun" moments while keeping a stoic demeanor.

"Sometimes, there would be children taking a good look at us and it appears. There's a man and a woman, it's a real picture!" Caneodoc smiled.

Endurance test

Extreme weather poses another endurance test. During summer, the guards usually get saturated in the sun, while during rainy and while guards on special occasions and drills on ordinary days...also ready to take it easy.

Come the rainy season, they can "retreat" to the guard house on either side of the monument—but only if it gets too heavy. Normally, though, they can't keep their feet on.

"We always tell them before leaving the barracks for the Luneta that they should be good-looking. Keep their shoes shined. For once they take their positions at the monument, they cannot afford to miss because people observe them. That's part of our indoctrination," Mayor said.

Sisa, Crispin, Basilio lived here, say Bulacan townsfolk

To next page A-5

in Rizal's "Noli Me Tangere" published in Berlin in 1887.

"Noli Me Tangere" ("Touch Me Not") and its sequel, "El Filibusterismo" ("The Reign of Greed"), exposed the abuses of the Spanish friars and earned for Rizal the ire of the Spanish authorities.

Rizal was executed on Dec. 30, 1896, and his two books are now required reading for Filipino high school and college students.

Bloodstained walls

Gov. Wilrio Vergel de Dios, 72, told the first heard the story from her parents and elders centuries. Born in 1926, Vergel de Dios spent many summers offering flowers at the church, often playing on the convent after the traditional Flores de Mayo ritual.

She said the stud her playmates used to gaze at the blood-stained wall and wonder over the soil. "The stains were red and clear," Segundo first said.

Gigi Valdezamora, who works at the municipal hall, said she heard the story from her mother, who in turn in her 80s. She also heard the story from her grandmother, now deceased.

"It's just a story," said Valdezamora, who is active in parish activities.

THIS IS SAN JUAN DE DIOS CHURCH in San Rafael, Bulacan, where local lore says Crispin was a sacristan and was tortured cruelly by the Spanish parish priest. One night, Crispin disappeared never to be seen again, which caused his mother Sisa to lose her mind. LYDIA BACUDIO

Tina, a Manila-based professional in her 30s, heard the story from her grandparents and described the account as "vague and moving."

Tableau

Nevertheless, the room in the convent where Crispin was purportedly tortured to death now has a tableau which has a manequin resembling Rizal.

The Rizal mannequin sits behind a desk, writing. He leans the soul where Crispin's body was supposedly cremated.

In the Noli, Rizal described Crispin as "a rapid boy with large black eyes." He and older brother Basilio were employed to be church to "bell ringers" to help their mother Sisa. Their father was a man who liked going to cockfights and beat their mother.

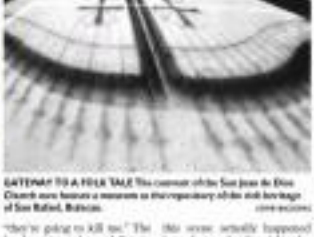
The boys' unhappy life worsened sooner when the local sacristan accused Crispin of stealing "two onzas" which was then equivalent to P32. On the day the loss was discovered, Crispin was not allowed to leave the convent, while Basilio was allowed to leave only after 10 p.m., which was past the 9 p.m. curfew.

Last time

Crispin begged Basilio not to leave him because, he said, "they're going to kill me." The head sacristan dragged Crispin down the stairs from the bell tower and into the shadows. That was the last time Basilio saw his brother.

Learning the convent past rumors, Basilio was shot by the guards) and the police (here) who fled death. A bullet grazed Basilio's head. Though bleeding from a head wound, he managed to go home to his mother that night.

That is the background to the heartbreaking scene of the maltreatment Sisa, who soon loved the events, looking for her sons Crispin and Basilio.



GATEWAY TO A FOLK TALE This convent of the San Juan de Dios Church now houses a museum as the repository of the rich heritage of San Rafael, Bulacan. LYDIA BACUDIO

Engr. Filomeno Capiral said the town has a rich heritage. "The ranchers, although now have gone abroad, are helping preserve this heritage," he said.

Four years ago, Fr. Dennis Espejo, who was then the parish priest, organized the Consortium on the Cultural Heritage of San Rafael.

Little-known history

Espejo raised funds from overseas who made good here and abroad and established a museum.

The museum, located on the second floor of the convent, showcases a collection of religious artifacts and vestments, Bible families and furnishings. The town with the bloodstained walls is part of the museum.

There is a set to well-known historical fact about the San Juan de Dios Church. It was the site of one of the bloodiest battles between the Philippines and the Spanish troops.

According to the church's historical marker, Katipuneros led by Gen. Asterio Benipayo and Spanish troops under Lt. Col. Lopez Arriaga fought fiercely at the site. When the smoke cleared, an estimated 300 men were dead, among them the 28-year-old Benipayo, who was a good friend of another Bulakeño, the late general, Gregorio del Pilar.

Makati readies New Year bash, but motorists warned

By Julie M. Aurelio

MOTORISTS TAKE BETTER AVOID Makati commuters as Mayor Jejomar Binay pulls out all the stops to stage the city's countdown to the New Year on Ayala Avenue, in which thousands of revelers are expected to participate.

The city government is deploying 750 police, medical and public safety personnel to provide security during the fireworks display on New Year's Eve. Much of the activities will be centered in the intersection of Makati and Ayala avenues in front of the Peninsula Manila hotel.

"With close to a thousand medical and security personnel assisting to the city's guests, we expect our countdown to be one of the safest and most fun ways to usher in 2008. We have taken the necessary precautions," Binay said.

"The New Year's Eve countdown is our little way of celebrating and sharing love with all of Makati City and the Filipino people," he said.

Binay said the event is also a fundraising drive of the city government and the Eagle Kapamilya program of the ABS-CBN Foundation. Cash donations will be accepted during the affair, for which donors will get raffle tickets which will give them the chance to win gadgets and P1 million in cash.

The stretch of Ayala Avenue from Makati Avenue to Paseo de Roxas will be closed to traffic, as well as portions of Makati Avenue from Paseo de Roxas to Ayala Avenue, according to Superintendent Jun Miguel, chief of Makati's Department of Public Safety.

The traffic rerouting scheme took effect on Friday night to enable crews to begin ground preparations.

Motorists have been advised to take these alternative routes:

Passenger buses coming from the Light Rail Transit should take Buendia Avenue while buses coming from Edsa/Ayala Avenue can turn right to Buendia Avenue.

Buses coming from Edsa could also turn right on Arnaiz Avenue, right to Paseo de Roxas and left at Ayala Avenue.

Jeepneys coming from Nichols/Antipolo can make a right at Ayala Avenue and another right turn to Salcedo Street. Others coming from Edsa/Ayala can use Buendia Avenue.

Private vehicles coming from LRT/South Superhighway/Buendia going to the Central Business District can make a right on Ayala Avenue, then turn right to Paseo de Roxas.

Those coming from Edsa/Ayala going to Ayala Center can turn right on Ayala Avenue and then left to Hotel Drive or North Drive before making a left on Makati Avenue.

Motorists coming from Edsa can likewise turn right to Ayala Avenue and then make another right turn at Apartment Ridge.

Inset Miguel said public parking areas have been designated along the length of De la Rosa Street and Paseo de Roxas.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Sunday, December 30, 2007
Feast of the Holy Family
1st Reading: Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14

These are the Lord Jesus' first parents.

For the Lord established that children should respect their father; he confirmed the right of the mother over her children.

Whoever honors his father atones for his sins; he who gives glory to his mother prepares a treasure for himself.

Whoever honors his father will receive joy from his own children and will be heard when he prays.

Whoever glorifies his father will have a long life. Whoever obeys the Lord gives comfort to his mother.

My son, take care of your father in his old age, do not cause him sorrow as long as he lives.

Even if he has lost his mind, have patience; do not be disrespectful to him while you are in full health.

For kindness done to one's father will never be forgotten, it will serve as reparation for your sins.

Responsorial: Psalm 128:1-2, 3, 4-5
Blessed are those who fear the Lord.

Happy are all who fear the Lord,
all who walk in his ways!
By the labor of your hands you shall live;
happiness and prosperity shall be yours.

Blessed are those who fear the Lord.

Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine
within your house;
your children like olive plants
around your table.

Blessed are those who fear the Lord.

Such shall be the blessing of the man
who fears the Lord.
May the Lord bless you from Zion
all the days of your life.

Blessed are those who fear the Lord.

Second Reading: Colossians 3:12-21
Clothe yourselves, then, as is fitting for God's chosen people, holy and beloved of him. Put on compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience; bear with one another and forgive whatever there is any occasion to hit on. As the Lord has forgiven you, forgive one another. Above all, clothe yourselves with love which binds everything together in perfect harmony. May the peace of Christ overflow in your hearts, for this end you were called to be one body. And be thankful.

Let the word of God dwell in you in all its richness. Teach and admonish one another with words of wisdom. With thankful hearts sing to God psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. And whatever you do in word or deed, do it in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as you should do in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not get angry with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, because that pleases the Lord. Parents, do not be too demanding of your children, lest they become discouraged.

Gospel: Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23
Take the child and his mother, and flee into Egypt.

After the wise men had left, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you; for Herod will soon be looking for the child to strike so child dies."

Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and left that night for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod. In this way what the Lord had said through the prophet was fulfilled: I called my son out of Egypt.

After Herod's death, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and go back to the land of Israel, for those who were out to kill the child are dead." So Joseph got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel.

But when Joseph learned that Archelaus had succeeded his father Herod as king of Judea, he was afraid to go there. So, being given further directions in a dream, he went to the region of Galilee.

There he settled in a town called Nazareth, in this way what was said by the prophets was fulfilled: He shall be called a Nazarene.

Commentary:

We have the old wisdom of a family: neither [in] their own children, in this case unfamily, the son who owes his parents unconditional dignity as they age, caring for them. But this is a dynamic here: [1] We belong to God's chosen race in the family of God that is the Church, founded on and baptized into the Christ. [2] We belong to the Body of Christ—those who hear the Word of the Lord and give this it—becoming one more flesh and blood of God. We treat as [a] the brother's and sister of God with Jesus forgiving, bearing with one another forgiving, including, trusting[,] and loving all in the greatest ways that are demanded: humility, meekness (not weakness), trusty, patience. We must dwell in peace and let the Word of God dwell with us [not as individuals but as a community, the disciples and the company of Jesus-Church]. We are to live with joy and worship and do all in a way each will call kingdom. Our days—whether we are married, single, children, parents, grandparents, this, or the friends of God is to be submissive to the Gospel and obey the Word of the Lord.

Being the family of God can be hard. It is fraught with tendency, fleeing from evil and destruction as we try to save our ancestor's lives, living with the ignorance of others. We may suffer, [even Herod], accusing us [as parents and history-changers] sovereign of the elements. Here is the Word of God in the Scriptures that tells us what to do and how to live with grace in all circumstances. We must listen and obey.

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GE imagination at work

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Maraming salamat, Kapamilya sa isang taon ng makabuluhang pagsasama.

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ABS-CBN

IT'S A BIRD ...
Mutt Peppino don't-not but one of the high divers of the world-renowned Oliver's Water Shows which has been attracting crowds to Enchanted Kingdom in Santa Rosa, Laguna. Were you bronzed high dives are part of the performers' repertoire.

Quiz bee in final rounds

AFTER CONDUCTING DIFFERENT levels of elimination tournaments, the 20th National Quiz Bee draws to its finals in two parts on Dec. 30 and Jan. 6 at 8 p.m. at the Development Academy of the Philippines auditorium in Tagaytay City.

The contests will air on television's Studio 23.

Finalists are the regional winners in the categories of Elementary Makabayan (Philippine History, Culture and Sports), Elementary Mathematics, High School Science and Technology, and Collegiate General Information and International Affairs.

Initially, six million students joined the bee.

The regional champions and their teachers were treated to a four-day camp at the SM conference center in Tagaytay dubbed the "Summit of the Super Quiz Bees," with tours, seminars and fellowships in preparation for the competition.

"These activities gave all awardees an opportunity to bond with their co-competitors and understand the values of learning and healthy competition," said Patricia Yang, vice president of the Quiz Bee Foundation.

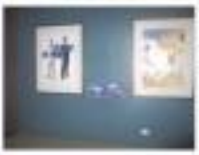
At stake for the four national champion students are: The President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo Trophy; Quiz Bee Gold Medallion of Excellence; Quiz Bee National Champion Certificate; P70,000 education plan; P100,000 life insurance policy; encyclopedia set; multimedia computer system; mobile phone; MP3 player; gift packages and certificates from World of Fun and other prizes. Winning teachers, schools, divisions and regions will also receive prizes.

Details may be obtained from Tayag at tel. 741 8856.

Nokia: Charging Up the Holidays

It was the nightmare before Christmas. You're lost in the middle of last-minute Christmas shopping while waiting for an important call or text message. Suddenly, your phone indicates that it's low batt. You try looking for your charger in your bag but then you remember leaving it at home. At that moment, you also realize that if even you did have your charger, you still would end up begging for a place to charge up since most establishments are not eager to share their electrical sockets.

Nokia knows that this nightmare is indeed an everyday reality. To address this glaring and ever-present need, it introduced a special service only here in the Philippines. As a holiday treat, Nokia came up with the Nokia Charging Station project to give back to its loyal users by keeping them charged up and connected.



The mobile phone giant has installed over 200 Nokia Charging Stations in places where people are always on-the-go. Now everyone with a Nokia phone can charge up for free at selected Ayala Cinemas, KFC outlets, Nokia Stores, Nokia Care Centers, Smart Wireless Centers, and Wendy's branches.

Initial reception of the Nokia charging stations has been extremely encouraging. Those who have experienced its convenience consider it a lifesaver and seek it out whenever their battery meters run low.

"It's very helpful, especially for people like me who are always on the road. Like yesterday, I went to Wendy's to charge up my phone and eat something while waiting," says Alex Beltonio.

"I was in Greenbelt 3 cinema and my phone's battery was almost totally drained. Good thing there was a charging station so I was able to charge up and receive an important call from my mom," adds Abby Bajenta.

The innovative mobile phone company plans to install more charging stations nationwide and team up with more partners. Soon, more people may charge up their mobile phones while enjoying their favorite cafés and restaurants. The idea of being cut off from the rest of the world because of a dead battery may even be relegated to the ghost of Christmas past.

Staying connected. Now that's a gift worth having.

Tired of going from building to building to distribute your resumes?
We can help you. JOB

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OPINION

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Rizal in us

EDITORIAL

RIZAL DAY FINDS A NATION REMEMBERING RIZAL and engaging in a debate reminiscent of the inner struggle the national hero underwent in his lifetime: the struggle between a pious hope for reform and the faith in peaceful change, on the one hand; and the temptation to throw caution to the wind and to plot and command revolution, on the other.

The struggle was resolved in Rizal's mind by his decision to reject the revolution option as premature, and to condemn it in a manifesto—an act, however, he carried out consciously as a last homage to his own principles even as he understood that he would be proclaimed a martyr by the revolutionaries and used by them as a symbol. The point and counterpoint of Rizal's life were his manifesto condemning the revolutions and his last poems in which he proclaimed himself just another fallen patriot, no different from those shot to death by Spanish rifles in the field of battle. But to Rizal, being used as the symbol of a revolution that was doomed to fail was a small price compared to his being set on a pedestal so future generations would have a chance to study and absorb his deepest principles: the virtues of education, of self-discipline and of self-improvement as a means toward improving society as a whole.

The Philippine Revolution did not lead to independence; it led to the clash of Andres Bonifacio and the self-born Republic of Malolos. It would take the overblown rhetoric and scheming of an independence movement, every bit as elitist and suspicious of the masses as the Propaganda movement and Rizal himself, to obtain independence for the Philippines in 1946. Just as it would take a movement divorced from the top, and suspicious of the masses, to reclaim freedom from the dictatorship in 1986. This is not to discount the romantic attractions of a revolution and of the raised fist, but as we have seen time and again, it is peaceful assembly and the dedicated effort to rethink and reform the values and virtues of democratic governance that effectively stop tyranny of its appearance of irrevocability and make men free.

This means that, now more than ever—though indeed, as always—Rizal's genius has been demonstrated again by what the country is experiencing. The populism (in its crudest form) that elevated Joseph Estrada to the presidency has been exposed as neither a victory for the masses nor a demonstration of democracy at work. Instead, it has been shown as a demonstration of all that Rizal rejected: popularity instead of merit, passion instead of reason, impulsiveness instead of moderation and good judgment. And what people have increasingly come to realize is that democracy and good government, national development and the stability of the body politic must be anchored on both a citizenship and a leadership firmly grounded on moral values and the responsible exercise of rights. For this reason, President Macapagal-Arroyo is entitled, but not supported by the people.

And yet, it is not enough to just recoil from the excesses of the present administration. It would be wrong to think that the current political crisis calls only for sobriety and belief in reform, but not for the necessary leap of faith and a change in the governors and governance of our country. To think so—that it is enough to just shrink the present administration into changing—is to learn only half of what Rizal wanted us to understand. There are times when reason, education and curiosity call upon citizens to make a stand and sacrifice their lives and treasure for their principles.

It was Rizal, despite opportunities given him to escape, or surrender completely, who stood up for his principles before what everyone considered a kangaroo court. But the bankrupt nature of the system could not have been exposed if it were not demonstrated that the system could so easily condemn an innocent man.

Sane gun bill

FOREIGN COMMENT

ONE MIGHT THINK THAT A GUN BILL WHICH HAS THE support of nearly understandably opposing groups as the National Rifle Association and the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence would have an easy time moving through Congress. But that hasn't been the case for legislation that would make it easier to disarm people with documented mental health problems when they attempt to buy guns.

President Bush should sign the bill without hesitation when it emerges in its current form in order to move offbeat but mentally unstable people to acquire guns, without trampling on the Second Amendment rights of law abiding Americans. The Daily Sentinel's Grand Junction, Colorado

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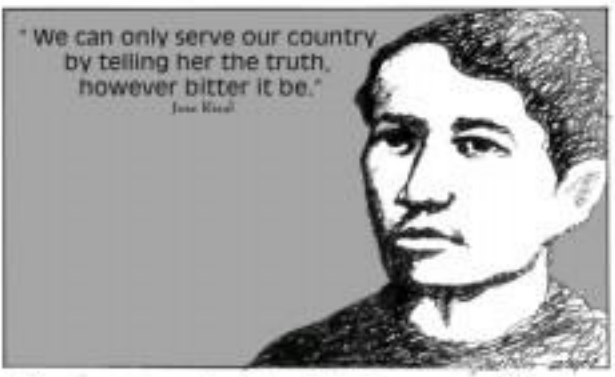

The most precious jewel in the crown of liberty

SEPARATE OPINION

Isagani A. Cruz

I DO THIS COLUMN FOR 2007 BY ASKING A basic constitutional fact—the right against censorship. This is an indispensable element of freedom of expression, that is recognized and practiced—or should be—in all republican regimes.

I have done this several times in this paper and elsewhere, but this is a right that can never be overemphasized or needlessly reiterated. It is a right of which the government should be perpetually reminded lest the people's tendency to be disrupted or their region to not proceeding as about encourage the censor to smoking it.

I am doing this again because of the action taken by the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB) in giving three movies an "X" rating and banning them from public exhibition. It says they are "heinous and defamatory to the good name and reputation of the President of the Philippines," have "a tendency to incite rebellion and sedition," "undermine faith and confidence in the government and duly constituted authorities," and are "mut-related" and "black propaganda."

If the members of the Board had been my students in Constitutional Law they would surely deserve to have flunked. If they are lawyers, they have discredited their Alma Mater (for those) degree them. Their pronouncements are subject would condemn as criminal hostile comments against the Macapagal-Arroyo and her government.

Movie what we celebrate make every day. We cannot be said to enjoy freedom when fear has no opponents in the MTRCB are more popular than the Pope.

Either they are excessively eager to please their benefactors or they are grossly ignorant of their functions. Perhaps both. I am willing to clarify the responsibility of finding a person base enough to accept the office of censor and at the same time good enough to perform its duties. The members of the MTRCB are guilty of both crimes.

* * *

Sunday's Gospel (Mt. 2, 13-15, 19-23) tells the story of Joseph, the man who knew how to listen, and who knew how to obey. Upon the instruction of the angel of the Lord, Joseph took Jesus and Mary to Egypt, and later on took them back to the land of Israel. There he settled in Nazareth to bring up the Child so that it would be fulfilled what was said by the prophets: He will be called a Nazarene.

* * *

Today is the feast of the Holy Family. What makes a family holy? It is the presence of God. What makes a family unholy? It is the absence of God. When God is absent, the members of either filled up with mistrust, hatred, envy, unfaithfulness, neither of which gives true peace. Is God present in your family? Are the Gospel values a value in your family?

* * *

Take a look at your family today. There are three marks of a good family: close to God, close to one another, close to the people. Some families are close to God, but they are not close to one another. Some families are close to God and to one another, but they are not close to the people. And it could happen that some families are close to the people and to one another but they are not close to God. So, how's your family?

* * *

Want to hear a beautiful love story? Sometime in March 2004, I had Mass at a mall, and noticed a good looking girl who looked such a good girl learning to serve at all congregation the Mass. After the Mass, she came over the table where I was signing my books. I looked at her and asked her, "Do you have a boyfriend?" She smiled and light answered "Yes." "Then you look such a good girl, and I have this nephew who is such a positive, and relatives are could never each other!" That's how it all started. Well, as you the story short, last Dec. 16, 2007, our whole family was in Iloilo where we had the wedding of our nephew Jeffrey and del Rosario and Ivy Espinosa. In my heart, I knew from the very start that God was present in their hearts, and that God will continue to be the answer of their relationship and love. This told you journey and joy!

* * *

On the plane to Iloilo, I counting only seated beside me said: "Nanoon me sir. Why are you holding the rosary? Are you nervous?"

I explained to her that I was not nervous, and that it was a habit of mine to always have the rosary when I travel. This started my conversation with Kristine, a 24-year-old bubbly lawyer who was back for a vacation in Iloilo after 10 years in the United States. She was so happy to come home. I found out in our conversation that she has not forgotten the Christian values her parents taught her. I was happy to know that she continues to value privacy, clean living and chastity. It all boils down to what parents teach the children. So, answer of persuade from the outside can destroy the home and the home that have God in their guide.

* * *

Sometimes we forget that we should never exchange the "Philippine Christmas" for anything. She said that there's something in the way we celebrate Christmas here that we should not lose even in the face of many things which is beginning to set in. She told me when we must uphold, especially at Christmas, is the family. Another is joy in spite of deprivations. The abundance tends to be spoiled of giving. Finally, we mentioned many, saying that Jesus will survive as a people and as a nation. For, we need to learn to ponder coming from outside our country to tell us that we are not doing too bad after all.

* * *

A timely message for all of us, as the old year comes to an end, and a new year is about to begin: "Do not look back in anger; do not look forward in fear; look around in anticipation and love."

* * *

Another beautiful message we all should say: "To those I have wronged, I ask for forgiveness. To those I may have helped, I miss I did more; to those who have helped me, I miss it say thanks!"

* * *

A Christmas moment happened when we were saving breakfast on Christmas Day at our community dining room. An old woman had just walked in and said: "Is it wrong to May I come in and eat?" We let the little woman reminded her a moment because the dining room was all thanks to "outsiders" and there were rules in the house that had to be kept. After recovering from our initial shock and disbelief, the oldest man looked where and by use we stood up, gave her a plate, gave her a glass of water, a cup of coffee and just welcomed her. We, the Lord visited us that Christmas morning and reminded us that our loving must be concrete, and that our service must not be stifled by rules and regulations. Wishing you all a life of love free from fear and disinfections.

Happy New Year!!!

* * *

A memorare aride she Lord:

Lord, help me see to stop listening and see to stop obeying. Amen.

Listen and obey

MOMENTS

Fr. Jerry M. Orbos, SVD

Philippine philanthropy

WITH DUE RESPECT

Antonio V. Taguiwalbon

Supersonic

REBEL WITHOUT A CLUE

Patricia Evangelista

Families in transition

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

Pakistan after Bhutto

WORLD VIEW

Arif Rafiq

THEY SAID

Incidental

"My support for [President Macapagal-Arroyo] is only as incidental and secondary to my promotion and enhancement of the national interest."

—Former President Fidel V. Ramos, saying the Philippine has "no better option" for president

Authorized

"We want to assure you that the chain of command of the Armed Forces is intact and all the troops know exactly what are happening are authorized ... but no one can say everyone else, whatever you are troops, please report to us."

—Lt. Gen. Romeo T. Tolentino, Chief of Staff, Armed Forces of the Philippines, after the failed power grab at the Peninsula Manila in July 2007

Exception

"You only house death sentences and sentenced inmates at the [Leyte Regional Prison]. Whatever [are] left, [some] may be so arrogant may have violated, they are not supposed to be [in] there. [This] was an exception out of the rules. Whether the government has been exasperating or 'extraordinarily spoiled'?"

—Gov. Remedios Loreto on the presence of pop singer Sharon Cuneta in prison [Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV said other participants in the Peninsula Manila siege were also pampered]

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TALK of the TOWN

Editor Juan F. Sarmiento Jr.

MANILA PEN SIEGE

Media's role in conflict situations

SOME 50 MEMBERS OF THE MEDIA, INCLUDING TWO INQUIRER REPORTERS, were humiliated by the police for doing their job—informing the public about the revolt led by Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV and Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim in Makati City on Nov. 29.

After the police subdued the revolt at the Manila Peninsula hotel, broadcast and print journalists were rounded up at gunpoint, handcuffed and herded like cattle to Camp Bagong Diwa in Taguig City.

The authorities were incensed that the journalists did not heed the order to vacate the hotel. Had the journalists heeded the order, the public would not have known what was happening inside the hotel. Real deeds are often committed far from the prying eyes of the media.

Surely, police and military officials know who the bona fide members of the media were. Many of them covered at one time or another the Philippine National Police, the Department of Interior and Local Government, the Department of National Defense, and Malacañang.

The authorities also know the police and military intelligence agents who passed themselves off as journalists during the siege. Understandably, the police did not touch these agents.

By Maria A. Ressa

MEMBERS of the media are led onto a bus at the Manila Peninsula hotel in Makati with their hands cuffed.

ON NOV. 29, MORE THAN 50 journalists were arrested, handcuffed and transported to Camp Bagong Diwa in Bicutan.

Twelve of the journalists were from ABS-CBN, detained in "detention and custody" according to the police. Others were told they would be sentenced in cases as their identities were verified.

One handful of news gathering, Cherie Vello, went immediately to the Peninsula hotel to identify our people; yet, she was told they would still have to be arrested and brought to Bicutan. We were told the cases were a dangerous precedent and invoke our nation's democracy.

There are two points I'd like to make about the role of media in conflict situations like the Peninsula siege. First, our democracy rests on the principle that the people have a right to know. Section 7, Article III of the 1987 Philippine Constitution recognizes "the right of the people to information on matters of public concern."

Law enforcement and government officials must be accountable to the public, and our history has shown there is no better means to do that during crisis situations than live television coverage.

Times of uncertainty

In a 2004 national survey by ABS-CBN, over 90 percent of adult Filipinos said that during any major event, they looked for news, with 45 percent turning to TV as their first source. They trust it. Almost. After the 2007 elections, that increased, hitting 95 percent in Metro Manila, according to Pulse Asia.

The Filipino love for information increases during times of uncertainty, highlighted during nearly a dozen coup attempts and withdrawals of support in the last two decades. (1) 1986 and 2001, the two "people power" times; (2) the smaller people power events, while failed attempts were televised during Erap Era, the Oakwood mutiny and the Peninsula siege.

Since then (since Erap), it obviously doesn't follow that television coverage automatically means success. During all these, 1986 excluded, ABS-CBN reported in a similar and consistent fashion, spurred on by the public's right to know. In particular, our duty we accepted the risks, including unwounded and not isolated, unlocked and the handling of reporters (not by the police line by a source of the public we serve).

Need to be informed

While the State has the right to protect itself, the public has the right to know—and as we have seen, the Filipino has always made a choice. Focus group discussions conducted by ABS-CBN between Dec. 3 and Dec. 5 reflects that. The participants expressed an overwhelming sentiment that they wanted to be kept informed, saying live television coverage should continue.

"We believe this is critical because an uninformed public makes any democracy untenable. It is in this light that media should be considered partners in promoting democracy rather than the other way around.

It is important that the public has the information it needs to make an informed decision because that is the foundation of our democracy. Yes, by screening out journalists, authorities effectively shut down ABC's live coverage of the post-siege situation at the Peninsula hotel.

Censorship

They acted to confiscate videotapes and equipment from the patrons, photographers and cameramen. The police violated their own definition of the "crime scene" by approaching our transmission facilities outside the Peninsula to try to confiscate our videotapes and stop our coverage. This is effectively censorship—at a time when the conflict had all but been neutralized. To date, they still have at least one videotape and two radios confiscated by ABS-CBN.

The second point, which has more ramifications for the future, is the role journalists play in conflict situations. On Dec. 5, Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno called the Peninsula a "crime scene" and said that journalists violated rules during the siege. He cited Article 151 of the Revised Penal Code, which has to do with "resistance and disobedience to a person in authority" and Presidential Decree No. 1829 for "obstruction of justice."

Chilling effect

These statements have far-reaching implications for journalists in every post-conflict situation. Reporting on a conflict situation has to worry that he or she may be arrested and charged. Beyond that, if this journalist can be charged as an accessory, something unforeseen that they wanted to be kept informed, saying live television coverage should continue.

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Chilling effect

These statements have far-reaching implications for journalists in every post-conflict situation. This may be the first time these rules were used, it is also the first time that the PNP has been the lead agency in a political conflict situation, which in turn many analysts say is the root cause of the events, not just a "crime scene" complete with containers of bank robberies and murder.

Even other coup attempts or pseudo-withdrawals of support in the past 21 years were handled by the Department of National Defense. Perhaps this is part of the reason why the rules were changed in the Peninsula siege.

Hold the line

We journalists are by no means perfect. Some of us can be arrogant at times and tend to have our heads turned by the police in this instance. But the lesson we need to hold the line to simply because if we give in, we would have contributed to weakening our democracy by depriving the public of its inherent right to know and serve.

Having reported from numerous conflict zones in Southeast Asia and around the world, I am very aware of the risks we face as journalists. In Indonesia, I barely survived a crossfire between government troops and protesters.

In Aceh, my team and I were detained and—had we been regarded given the authoritarian regime then; in East Timor, Pakistan, India and China, despite the dangers and restrictions, you subvalue the risks and always make sure the odds are high that you will survive to tell the story.

Ludicrous

When I have learned from experience is that every situation is different, and what you do depends on the system of government. I.e., you would not make the same decision under a democracy that you would under a dictatorship.

Every journalist's and news organization's assessment of risk varies. That is why I find it slightly ludicrous for the PNP to ignore the ethical standards of the CBC, BBC and ABS-CBN in Dubai in order that all journalists should have left when requested—that there is a one size fits all response.

DZRH radio reporter Noel Alamar

All these issues provoke gut reactions—the philosophy of the organization—but in the end, the judgement call and the decision on any to go or not with the journalist. We balance the fear for personal safety with the duty to report the truth.

Masquerading as journalists

The police claim we were before and I mean we have said—Magdalo soldiers changed clothes and put on press passes. Everyone even in our us, including the police and military intelligence agents who were participating in the journalism. During the crisis, we did not report that because we did not want to compromise their work. You don't pressure increased the danger for us. Those agents could have easily told their superiors who were the real journalists and who were only masquerading as members of the media.

We categorically state that in no instance did any journalist "obstruct justice" in the Peninsula siege process and reporting, the opposite was true. Accordingly made by the police of our live coverage are now being used by authorities as evidence against those it charged in court.

PNP got news from media

The police even acknowledged that there was a failure of communications within their organization. They mobilized only after they were "informed" of the event through TV and radio coverage. It is clear the police benefited from us doing our job. We assume in both observing and helping journalists simultaneously.

Our fear is that the arrests of journalists may herald more dangerous times ahead. In many ways, many developments have eroded press freedom in our country in 2007, three more made journalists killed in the Philippines than in Iraq, and today—despite pressure from the international community—the complacent killings of journalists and other leaders continue with impunity.

Information warriors, intellectual property and libel suits have been used to intimidate to control journalists. In 2006, Freedom House has 10.7 severely curtailed press freedom after authorities threatened to shut down news organizations and sentenced radio-outside TV networks.

Last year, Freedom House, an international group, which conducts an annual survey of political rights and civil liberties, downgraded to rating of the Philippines from free to partly free.

Insult

Given this context, the arrests of journalists is extremely alarming, especially since it has now been elevated to policy by Puno, who says journalists like us "provoke the people to it again. To add insult to injury, after authorities apologized for the arrests, they began to publicly question the motives of our journalists.

Officials maligned us by implying we were working with Trillanes' group despite the absolute lack of evidence for those statements. Now, they say they will look at the behavior of reporters covering the siege. All this only points out that the attempt to intimidate and harass journalists continues.

While it is inconvenient for law enforcement officials to have to contend with media in conflict zones, it is a necessity guaranteed by the Constitution and a check and balance of a democratic society.

On Nov. 29, the journalists who chose to stay and report on the Peninsula siege displayed tremendous courage and risked their safety for the public they serve. It calls into question the reports of "Correspondents' Association of the Philippines supports the spirit of our thoughts: "If someone—his or her—did deliver the truth before us, we would give way if we chose to leave at the request of the PNP. Then we would have to swallow the PNP version of the truth because we chose to give up the scoop we already had."

That would be a disservice to the public we all serve.

Maria A. Ressa is the head of ABS-CBN News & Current Affairs. Her email is mres@abs-cbn.com.

This article is the paper she read at the hearing of the Senate committees on justice and human rights on Dec. 13.

Charter change eyed to revive peace talks

Dureza: Amending Constitution one way of giving Moros what they want

By Christine O. Avendaño

THE GOVERNMENT MAY HAVE TO resort to Charter change next year to get the stalled peace talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) restarted.

Presidential peace adviser Jesus Dureza said yesterday one of the proposals the government was looking at to get the peace talks moving again was the carving up of a Bangsamoro Judicial-area in Mindanao.

This would require amending the Constitution, Dureza said.

"My recommendation is to amend the Constitution only for the purpose of installing a Bangsamoro state or a Bangsamoro region or whatever name it will be called," he said in a phone interview.

Dureza made it clear, however, that the idea was not to place the entire country under a federal system of government.

Additional territories

"We already have the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao as a starting point for this proposal," he said, noting that aside from the ARMM, the "additional territories" that were agreed upon in the armistice point between the government and the MILF would probably make up the Bangsamoro federal state.

He said that "hopefully" the government could make the amendment in the Commission next year.

Dureza said this was one of the proposals the government peace panel was "working on" and which may be taken up at the next Cabinet security cluster meeting on January.

President Macapagal-Arroyo was set to meet with the Cabinet security cluster the other day but this was canceled due to time constraints, Dureza said.

He said the setting up of a federal state in the South was being looked at because the peace negotiations between the government and the MILF encountered so far impasses in resolving the Core Issues.

The current impasse occurred after the MILF pulled out of the exploratory talks in Malaysia in mid-December, which both sides were supposed to finally firm up an agreement on the boundaries of a Moro homeland.

The MILF left the talks after it objected to the inclusion of the phrase "non-contiguous persons" as the mode for implementing the draft memorandum of agreement on ancestral boundaries.

New formula

The MILF view that as a sign the entire Bangsamoro juridical entity would be subjected to a plebiscite.

Explaining the government's side, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita had said the government "cannot compromise our reference to the Constitution," in drawing up an agreement with the MILF.

Ermita, however, expressed optimism 2008 would be a "good year" for the peace process as he disclosed that the government peace panel was working on a new formula to bring the MILF back to the peace table.

On Friday, Dureza acknowledged the two sides had been "locked in" by Constitutional issues on the ancestral domain aspect.

"We have to grapple with it realistically because we cannot commit to concessions without considering constitutional issues," he said in a phone interview.

He was asked about one of the suggestions of Sen. Aquilino Pimentel on the setting up of a federal state," he said.

A federal state is something many people in Mindanao have long aspired for, Dureza said.

HIGHWAY TO BOARD A BUS

Passengers scramble through the windows of a bus in a Pasay City terminal, the better to grab a seat never mind if there was a line on the bus door. City dwellers are in a rush to get to the provinces to spend the long Rizal Day holiday with loved ones.

Makati Med doc belies pyramid scam charge

By Leila B. Salaverria

A DOCTOR CONNECTED WITH THE Makati Medical Center has contested a Department of Justice resolution recommending her prosecution for large-scale estafa, saying her conjunction could not have been a pyramiding scheme given that it flourished for 10 years.

In seeking to dismiss the criminal complaint against her, cardiologist Estrella Abesada-Rivera also said that if First Consumer Lending Corp. (FCLC), of which she was president, had been a pyramiding organization, it was strange there was only one complaint against her.

The DOJ earlier ordered the filing of large-scale estafa charges against Rivera, podiatrist Alan Shirley Pascual-Ong, Marvela Almajeda, Gilbert Cuenca and three persons identified only as John, Jobe and Jenny Doe.

The complainant in the case before the DOJ was Anna Trivera, the respondent's own father-in-law.

Large returns

Jesus said he was promised large returns for his investment in FCLC. He said that as of January 2007, his investment amounted to P328.69 million, but his requests for the return of his money were unheeded.

In her motion for reconsideration, Estrella Rivera said pyramiding schemes only offered several months, whereas FCLC operated for 10 years, or since 1997.

She said the charge of large-scale estafa was questionable because there was only one complainant against her, and this was her father-in-law. She said it was unlikely she would have a Ponzi scheme.

"Strangely, the lone complainant Jesus Rivera is the father-in-law of respondent Dr. Estrella Rivera. Because of complainant's close relation by affinity to herein respondent, it is highly unbelievable and contrary to human experience that he would be a victim of the corporation or deceived by herein respondent," her motion read.

Rivera maintained she did not defraud her father-in-law and pointed out that he himself had admitted to regularly receiving checks from the corporation representing the interest his investment had earned, and which he deposited in his bank account.

Unreasonable delay

"In the case at bar, the absence of fraud or deceit was all the more strengthened when complainant Jesus Rivera admitted ... that his transaction(s) with FCLC were covered by promissory notes and checks issued to him by herein respondent in payment of interest. As such, the issuance of the promissory notes and checks were in payment of a pre-existing obligation," she said.

She also noted that Jesus had been an investor in FCLC since 1997 but only filed the complaint against her this year.

"Such unreasonable delay in the filing of the complaint cast serious doubt on the veracity and truthfulness of the complaint," she said.

She said FCLC was registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission to engage in lending investments and had P1 million in capital.

Recommending the charges against Rivera and the other respondents, state prosecutor Diosdado Ibdalsan said they failed to show evidence to overturn Jesus' allegation, which is backed with checks and promissory notes.

Ibdalsan also dismissed their claim that FCLC was just a failed business venture, and likened it to a scam or a pyramiding scheme.

HEAD START ON DEPED

US agency brings cyber education to RP schools

By Jerry E. Esplanada

A US GOVERNMENT AID AGENCY has achieved what the Department of Education has yet to accomplish—set up a cyber education program network in the country.

For over a year now, the United States Assistance for International Development (USAID) has been putting up its Gwn 2 project, a computer literacy and satellite Internet access program aimed at improving the quality of education in public high schools in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and other war-torn areas in the Southern Philippines.

Gwn 2, short for Growth enabling Entity in Mindanao (Phase 2), provides Internet access, computers and information and communications technology equipment supplies, among other services.

"Basically, it is cyber education. Including school hours, in particular, until the skilled trained services to students and teachers. In some areas, the school automatically becomes an Internet cafe' for local folk when classes are over," said Horacio Tabing, chair of TSR Telecoms Inc., the project implementing arm.

To date, USAID has put up Internet services in more than 200 schools in Mindanao, according to Tabing.

Other Gwn 2 education development activities include English language instruction and vocational education intervention programs, as well as enhancing the planning and budget skills of the DepEd-ARMM office.

$1-million project

With an allocation of more than $1 million (P41,100,0000), the Gwn 2 project expects to assist at least 200 schools, mainly in the ARMM, according to the USAID office in Manila.

The Gwn 2 program began in 2002. It continues the work carried out under the original Gwn project which operated from 1996 to 2002.

The Louis Berger Group, an American firm, is overseeing the installation of the Gwn 2 network. It has local offices in the cities of Davao, Cotabato and Zamboanga.

It had earlier contracted iPhi ave LT (iWIT), a local firm, to install the Gwn 2 equipment in project-covered schools.

Satellite broadband

Armed with a 1955 congressional franchise as a provider of "satellite telecommunication services to the public through satellite and terrestrial networks, TSR Telecoms is providing WIT with satellite services and project-related equipment.

Last year, TSR Telecoms joined forces with the Thaicom-then Satellite Public Company Limited (Satcol), operator of the Ipstar satellite broadband system.

Ipstar's local hub is located near Clark Air Base in Angeles City.

Aside from Thailand and the Philippines, Ipstar is also providing full broadband satellite services in Australia, Zealand, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam and China.

Although not formally part of the USAID's Education Quality and Access for Learning and Livelihood Skills or EQuALLS project, "the education activities of the Gwn 2 program are closely coordinated with EQuALLS," said USAID project management specialist Arsan Lee Amit.

Cheaper Internet access

TSR Telecoms said WIT "have been installing the USAID cyber education systems in Mindanao schools since December 2006," disclosed Tabing.

Some 100 high schools in the towns of Palimbang, Lebak, Balimaan and Bagumbayan, all in Sultan Kudarat, were among the first recipients of the high-tech project.

"There's many good items. The (USAID-funded) system is cheaper than the (China-funded and -installed) cyber education project (CEP) of the government. Our equipment cost only P350,000 per school. The (DepEd's CEP would cost at least P400,000 per school," Tabing pointed out.

Gwn 2's Internet service charge also costs less—only P5,000 a month for the connection for the DepEd-grant's subsidy fee of around P45,000.

Interactive

Tabing noted "the Gwn 2 model is also interactive. The DepEd's Chi na-funded CEP is a one-way learning system like Knowledge TV."

The DepEd's CEP supposedly aims to bridge the learning gap between rural and urban schools by using satellite technology to beam televised lectures by the department's master teachers to schools in far-flung areas nationwide.

Nearly 10,000 schools or 90 per cent of all public schools nationwide are expected to be connected by the government in the next three years.

The first phase of the project will cover some 3,000 elementary schools in 40+ to 60+ class municipalities, including those hard-hit by recent typhoons like the Sinot region, according to DepEd Secretary Jesli Lapus.

Improving education

On the other hand, some 10,000 public schools will benefit from the USAID program.

Aside from Sultan Kudarat, TSR Telecoms and WIT have installed CEP equipment in the following provinces: Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Basilan, Lanao del Norte, Lanao del Sur, Zamboanga del Norte, Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga Sibugay, North Cotabato, Agusan del Norte and Agusan del Sur.

TSR Telecoms aims to "provide Ipstar services for rural Internet connectivity and distance e-learning, e-governance, e-commerce, as well as provide cost-effective connectivity to other telecommunications service providers," Tabing said.

Ipstar "will not only help improve the countryside economy but uplift the lives of less-fortunate Filipinos living in the country's remotest areas by providing them with high-speed Internet connectivity," he said.

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Across the NATION

'Cracker makers say 2007 a bad year

BOCAUE, BULACAN—FIRECRACKER AND PYrotechnic manufacturers said 2007 is one of the worst years for the industry as the government's efforts to discourage Filipinos from using their products led to low sales this year.

While prices of firecrackers and pyrotechnic products have increased by P50-60 percent in the run-up to the New Year celebration because of high demand, advertisements on radio, TV and newspapers on the supposed dangers of using these products have discouraged people from buying them, according to Rolando Bonifio, vice president of the Philippine Pyrotechnic Manufacturers and Dealers Association Inc.

Bonifio said government-sponsored pings against the industry and various campaigns launched by the Department of Health, the police and local governments have hurt the industry the most.

Pierre Dizon, PPMDAI president, earlier called as "absurd" the plan of Health Secretary Francisco Duque to phase out the use of firecrackers.

She said the plan would kill the firecracker and pyrotechnic industry in the country.

She asked the Department of Health to help inform the public about the proper and safe ways of using firecrackers and pyrotechnics, and not ban them outright.

Manufacturers and dealers said since Dec. 26, stalls selling firecrackers and pyrotechnics have started 24 hour operations to accommodate buyers.

Michael Bingham, one of the stall owners in Pyro Ville, an area designated for these products in Barangay Taro here, said prices have started to increase in the past three days due to high demand.

"Bumibo," one of the most sought after product, sells for P5.50 to P9 each. A box of "Five Star," which used to sell for P18, is sold for P30 to P40.

"Atomo," with 1,000 pieces of firecrackers strung together, sells for P1,000 to P4500, up from P250 last week. The bigger type, with 10,000 pieces, costs P2,500.

Some dealers also attributed the price increase to low supply as many manufacturers preferred fewer stocks this year due to the high cost of raw materials and chemicals. Gerrmela Reyes, Inquirer Central Luzon

Huwag magpaputok!

Maaaring mangyari sa'yo ito..

Sundin ang FOURmula Kontra Paputok!

- Huwag magpaputok! Gumamit ng ibang pampaingay tulad ng tambol, torotot at iba pa.
- Kung naputukan, hugasan ang sugat ng sabon at malinis na tubig at agad na pumunta sa pinakamalapit na ospital o health center.
- Huwag pulutin ang hindi pumutok na paputok.
- Huwag magpaputok ng baril.

DOH it na!

SUPPORTERS Of jailed former Muslim rebel leader Nur Misuari salute during their National Summit Conference, Dec. 28, at the South Cotabato Complex in Koronadal City

MNLF positive on review of 1996 pact with gov't

KORONADAL CITY—THE MORO National Liberation Front (MNLF) said it was optimistic that its impending meeting with the government and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, which will be held in Manila next month, will produce good results.

The meeting was aimed at finding solutions to the MNLF complaint that the government has not implemented the 1996 peace agreement in full.

MNLF southeastern, who are growing impatient over the alleged non-implementation of some provisions in the agreement, have occasionally clashed with soldiers, especially in the provinces of Sulu.

Hashim Salamat, MNLF secretary general, yesterday told the Inquirer that the government-MNLF Joint Working Group (JWG) held preliminary talks in Manila in connection with the tripartite meeting scheduled on Jan. 3.

The JWG, composed of three representatives each from the government and the MNLF, was created during the Tripoli tripartite meeting held in Jeddah in November.

Sema said the MNLF hopes to resolve some of these issues—a unified security force for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, a unique political system for the ARMM, MNLF representation in the national government.

"We are hopeful that the government will implement the remaining provisions of the peace treaty subsequently," Sema said by phone from Manila.

Some 3,000 supporters of jailed MNLF chair Nur Misuari converged here on Friday and rallied on the government to release him from prison.

During the summit, Misuari's supporters and their leader's release would boost peace and security efforts in Mindanao. Jeoffrey Maitem, Inquirer Mindanao

A SUPPORTER Of Misuari holds a flag on Dec. 28, during a summit of MNLF leaders and members in Koronadal City. The MNLF is awaiting talks with the government on the implementation of a 1996 peace agreement that was signed during the term of former President Fidel Ramos.

BAGUMBAYAN
Volunteers for a New Philippines

A Covenant for a New Philippines

We live in a time of crisis and confusion. We seem to have lost our way as a people and as a nation in this prolonged season of economic challenges and political rancor.

Fear and helplessness have led many citizens to become inured to corruption and injustice. Despair has driven many to hard and lonely work abroad. Many Filipinos no longer feel that they have a voice and a stake in the nation and its future.

We cannot long survive—much less prosper—on this path to self-destruction. We cannot lurch from one scandal and one rebellion to another, and expect to achieve our destiny as a modern, just, and progressive nation.

We need change on all levels of society – not just of men, but in men. We need a far-reaching and all-embracing vision; we need a genuine cause for hope; we need proven and inspiring leadership.

And above all, we need to think, to feel, and to act once again as one nation with one destiny, building on both our brightest prospects for the future and on the noblest traditions of our history.

More than four centuries ago, the great chief Rajah Sulayman led his people out of their old embattled Maynilad to a new settlement they called "Bagumbayan"—a new town, a fresh beginning. For Jose Rizal, Bagumbayan was not only the place of his own heroic martyrdom, but the very home and spirit of his dream of a free and prosperous Philippines. And before him, Fathers Gomez, Burgos, and Zamora shed their blood on that same hallowed ground in the name of freedom and democracy.

We now invoke that spirit in our quest of an even newer Bagumbayan—the 21st century Philippines our heroes could only have dreamt of, but which our people have long deserved and which we can yet build.

Bagumbayan is no longer just a place. It is we, the Filipino people, and all that we dream of being and becoming as a nation. And if it is to be, then we must make it happen.

Today, fortified by an abiding faith in God and in the Filipino, we pledge ourselves and join together in this Covenant for a New Philippines—one founded on moral courage, not political expediency; on the rule of law, not of brute power and feudal privilege; on inclusiveness and social justice, not protection for a few; on enterprise and industry, not handouts and quick profit; on education and skills development, not mendicancy and fortune-seeking.

We commit ourselves to finding and supporting new Filipino leaders—men and women with the vision, integrity, and competence to lead us to another Bagumbayan, our new Rajah Sulaymans, Gomburzas, and Rizals. And like these heroes, we shall not fear to do what is right and to break new ground—to value ideas over money, principles over popularity.

All of us who share this dream must courageously face the challenges of our times. Thus, in this act of union and cooperation, we declare:

First, that we must be RESPONSIBLE for ourselves, for our fellow Filipinos, and for our country. We must change our attitudes, and transform ourselves to become horizon-chasers with duty, dignity, and determination;

Second, that we can REINVENT GOVERNMENT to faithfully perform its prime duty to serve and protect the people;

Third, that we can fortify LAW AND ORDER through self-discipline, vigilance, and respect for the rule of law;

Fourth, that we can build a STRONG AND GROWING ECONOMY if we all work, save, and invest in order to prosper;

Fifth, that we must prioritize EDUCATION as the key to national development to compete and lead in the new global economy;

Sixth, that we must provide adequate access to HEALTH CARE for all our people, especially the needy;

Seventh, that we must create JOBS for our people, so that they will not need to seek their fortunes abroad, but rather devote their talents directly to their country and their families;

Eighth, that we must assist our people in securing decent HOMES to live in and LAND to work and build on, so they can be dignified and productive citizens;

Ninth, that we must strengthen and reinforce the FAMILY as the foundation of our nation to develop proper values and virtues in individuals and build solid character; and

Tenth, that we must protect and preserve the ENVIRONMENT for our posterity.

We must have the Vision grounded on Values and empowered by Volunteerism to achieve Victory. These are the ideals upon which we lay the foundation of our movement for change. We are the instruments of a movement dedicated to transform the Philippines into a Bagumbayan, a new Philippines.

We invite every patriotic Filipino to join us in this shared struggle. Let us embark together on this grand mission to reclaim, rebuild, and reconsecrate what Rizal—111 years ago today—bid farewell to as "our Eden lost," but which remains our birthright and our redemption: Bagumbayan.

Where our heroes have fallen, there shall we rise, reborn.

To these noble ends and principles, we hereby affix our names and signatures this 30th day of December, 2007.

Richard J. Gordon

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INQUIRER Mindanao

Resto offers fresh fish to eat, watch

By Jude S. Aligato
Correspondent
Zamboanga del Norte

WHOEVER SAID that great seafood dining are only experienced in famous and expensive hotels in the metropolis, where skilled chefs make delectable dishes?

In the remote town of Bacungan in Zamboanga del Norte, about 18 kilometers from Pagadian City, a seaport widely known as "Kan-anan sa Balas" offers superb dishes at a fraction of the amount charged in restaurants elsewhere.

Clients take their meals in bamboo cottages scattered on the first floor of two fishponds. As they dine, entertainment is provided by African catfish and golden tilapia going frenzy over food fetes thrown into the water.

THEY can't get any fresher than this. Itto and tilapia are exhibited at a 48-hectare fishpond in Bacungan, Zamboanga del Sur. The fish, says the fishpond owner, are not for food but "just for show" to display how fresh food can be at the Kan-anan sa Balas, a restaurant in the town. JUDE ALIGATO

Crab raiser

The restaurant was opened only on Nov. 8, according to its owner, Roy Quinsembing, who owns the 60 hectares of fishpond where it is afloat. Before going into this venture, Quinsembing was known as a crab raiser.

"I wanted to explore further because business is not just about raising, producing and marketing crabs, prawns, fish and bivalve," he said. "I had been running and operating a crab business since 1972, but it became not profitable in the long run because of disease affecting the crustaceans."

When the business turned bad, his employees, who have been with him for a long time, serve on the brink of losing their jobs, too, he said. So he thought of getting into the restaurant business.

Family business

The families of his 25 employees help out at the Kan-anan sa Balas.

"The head of the family is the one concentrating and attending to my farms while their wives and children take turns in serving the eatery either as cashiers, cooks, and even waitresses," Quinsembing said.

"Some also take care of the maintenance and other services required in the eatery."

Although the business was still new, clients have started coming. Many have learned of the place by word of mouth.

The dishes—such as "pinepesang sa tilapia," "kilawgos sa balas," "pesnit na manok" and "bihe"—are cooked and served "home-style."

And what would be more comforting than not having to think of paying much for every meal. For example, "pinepesang tilapia," which is actually broiled tilapia with lemon grass, tomato and other spices, only costs P55 per serving. Rice is free with that amount.

"Kilawgos sa balas," which is cooked with coconut milk and chili, costs only P180 per serving of two to three cups.

Vegetarian dishes

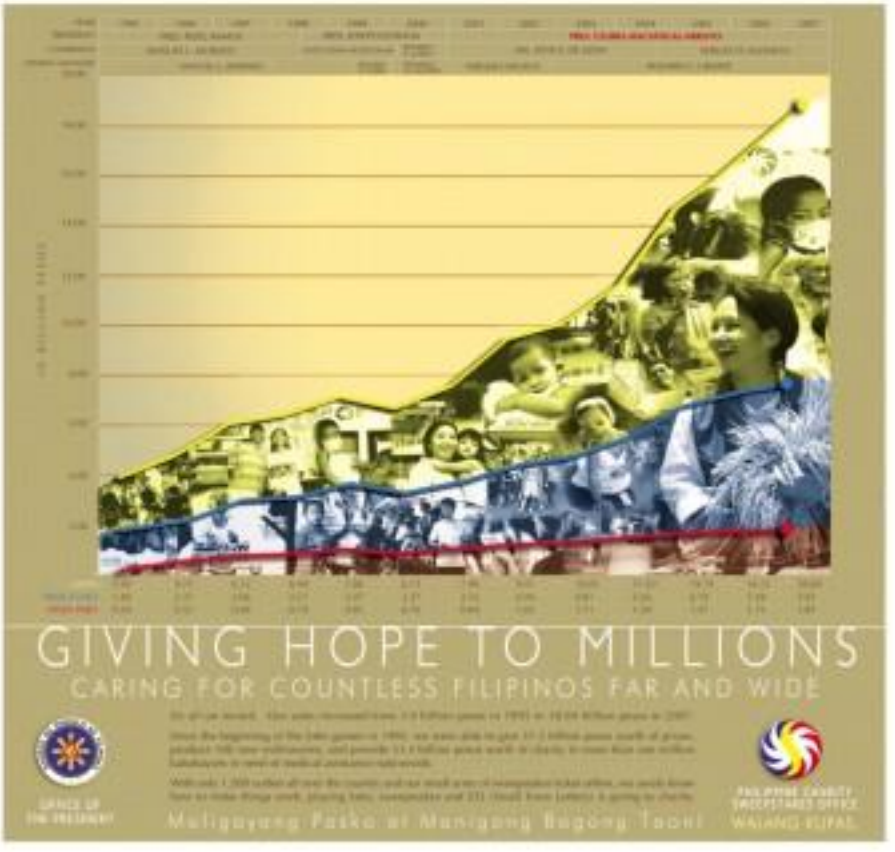
Quinsembing said a group of six could also try their "bilao," which consists of labo (pigeon and tilapia, spicy pinecked eggplant), spicy shrimps and chicken, and two pieces of native chicken. The dish costs P175 or around P29 per person.

What about diners who don't want fish or crustacean served? The menu always has ready alternatives, Quinsembing said.

For vegetarians, there are homegrown organic vegetables such as Chinese pechay or bangkong, string beans and eggplants.

And oh, there are fruits, such as banana, mangoes and papayas from Quinsembing's Royal Quality Agro Resources.

"Muslims can also eat here because we don't serve pork dishes. Only crustaceans, fish, chicken, vegetables and fruits," Quinsembing said.



Alaminos seen as ideal site of new airport in Pangasinan

By Gabriel Cardinoza
Inquirer Northern Luzon

ALAMINOS CITY—THIS CITY—gateway to the famous Hundred Islands National Park—has made its most sales pitch for an international airport as "the center of economic growth and development in the entire Pangasinan."

Mayor Fernando Braganza said on Thursday that the construction of an airport here would not only boost tourism in the Hundred Islands but also trigger economic growth and development in the entire province.

He issued the statement following reports that the local chapter of the League of Municipalities of the Philippines (LMP) had presented a memorandum to President Macapagal-Arroyo expressing preference for the airport project in Sta. Barbara town in central Pangasinan.

The LMP cited Sta. Barbara's proximity to Mimaropa (now, after) a popular tourist destination in Mindoro, Palawan, Romblon and Marinduque, and to the business centers of Urdaneta and Dagupan cities.

More attractions

Braganza said 74 percent of the land area of the province are in the first and second districts. These include Agno, Anda, Bani, Bolinao, Burgos, Eastd, Infanta, Mabini, Sison, Aguilar, Basista, Bautista, Binmaley, Dagupan, Labrador, Laoayan, Mangaldan and Urbiztondo towns, and this city.

"But the problem is that these are not accessible in the sense that overhead zong puede ng tanan dito (tourist) arrived is slowed down) because of the travel time," the mayor said.

With an airport, Braganza expected an increase in the number of investors for the tourism industry, "so there will be more business and job opportunities for the people of Pangasinan."

Agriculture benefits

The agricultural and industrial potential of the province will also be benefited, he said. He pointed out that the first and second districts occupied 51 percent of the land area of the province.

"So, the agricultural potentials of Pangasinan, where it comes to exportable products, a here. We have livestock, fisheries and mangrove," he said.

For Pangasinan

Special economic zones have been designated in this city and in neighboring Mabini, Infanta and Bani towns.

"Then, we have the major infrastructures. We have a seaport and a power plant in Sual. And the airport and seaport come together, they complement," he said.

Gov. Amado Espino Jr., who was reported to have expressed support for the construction of an airport in Sta. Barbara, clarified that he was not against the choice of Alaminos as site of an international airport.

"Whatever it will be located, I like it because I am the governor of Pangasinan," he said.

Using provincial government funds, Espino has started the rehabilitation of the airport in the capitol town of Lingayen, where washout pillars have been training.

"We have done our share in convincing the President to put up an airport in the province. Maybe, our [political leaders] should just talk about this Agoo zong magpaparanchos apo ng eroplano bang unan lenghan? This should be an economic issue rather than a political issue," Braganza said.

Communist rebs burn equipment for road repair

LUCENA CITY—COMMUNIST New People's Army (NPA) rebels torched two units of heavy equipment and a backhoe last Dec. 28, the military's Southern Luzon Command (Solcom) based in Camp Nakar here said Saturday.

Army Maj. Ranelulph Colmenares, Solcom spokesperson, cited a report saying that at about 5:30 p.m., at least 20 communist rebels burned one grader, one compactor and the backhoe being used by workers in Sitio Jubelagan Mangahan in Barangay Pagsanghan in San Francisco town located at the tip of the Bicolor Peninsula.

Farm-to-market road

Colmenares said that based on the report, the destroyed pieces of property which were being used in the construction of farm-to-market roads, were owned by San Francisco town Mayor Herman Sia, also the president of the Quezon province chapter.

Colmenares said the attack was allegedly the result of Sia's refusal to give in to the demands of communist rebels.

He did not elaborate on the supposed demands.

When contacted through his mobile phone, Sia denied involving the destroyed heavy equipment.

He identified the true owner of the burned equipment as Domingo Sia, a Lucena-based public works contractor.

"Once again the NPA demonstrated its desperation to extort money at the expense of the people who would have benefited from the road project," Colmenares said over the phone.

The Solcom official branded the communist rebels as "antidevelopment."

"They should be blamed for the ingredients of communities they traditionally terrorize," he said.

In the spirit of the Christmas season, the military declared a 22-day ceasefire from Dec. 16 to Jan. 6.

The NPA reciprocated and announced a similar truce on Dec. 24, 25, and 31, and on Jan. 1.

The communist guerrillas have stepped up attacks on government and other economic targets, especially communication towers of a private telecoms company that refused to pay the so-called revolutionary taxes.

According to the military, the Communist Party of the Philippines and the NPA have lost their traditional sources of funding and resources from abroad after they were listed as foreign terrorist organizations by the United States and the European Union in 2004. Jeffrie T. Mollave Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon

THE WATERS around the Hundred Islands attract vacationers and divers.

Palawan seen easy on mining as gas royalty seen coming in

By Redempto Anda
Inquirer Southern Luzon

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY—With at least P6 billion in national gas royalty expected over the next three years, officials can double if it wins ownership of the Camago-Malampaya oil and gas reserves in the Supreme Court, Palawan is going easy on mining investments.

"We won't really need those taxpayers if we can get the Malampaya money," Gov. Joel T. Reyes told the business fellowship last week's mining summit here.

"We will come up with the official policy statement on this in January after we have considered the issues raised in the mining summit," Reyes said.

Last week, the governor announced that the provincial government was rejecting the allocation of at least P3 billion he listed as development projects from the excavated Malampaya deep water to appeal with the national government to jointly utilize the funds while awaiting the SC ruling.

The agreement also allows the provincial government to maximize the Region's income of Palawan from Malampaya, a plan that is expected to bring in another P4 billion in cash revenues.

Service Contract 38 led by Shell Spec, which operates the gas project off El Nido, Palawan, has paid some P12.05 billion to royalty in the national government. The province filed a suit after President Macapagal-Arroyo declined in 2003 that the gas reserves were out of its jurisdiction.

During the mining summit, Reyes announced that Palawan would impose a moratorium on exploration activities in the nickel and manganese-rich areas of Rt. Marcinglafan, which is set to be declared a protected landscape.

He said small-scale mining operations in the province are also would be scrutinized after those had some scuffle fire from environmental groups for violations of the law.

"What would the province really get from them?" Reyes said in Filipino, referring to the tax exemptions allowed by mining laws to small-scale operations.

CAFFEINE BLAST
A firecracker vendor takes a coffee break at her stall in Iloilo City. The sale of firecrackers is picking up in the city, that has a large ethnic Chinese population, as the New Year draws near.

Magsaysay boy's SBMA post raises eyebrows

Gordon, Zambales gov cry foul on appointment of 23-year-old to his 2nd gov't job

By Tonette Orejas
Inquirer Central Luzon

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—EXCEPT for a stint as political affairs officer to his mother's congressional office, 23-year-old Vincent "Sobi" Magsaysay II has made it big in his second job.

The eldest son of Assn Vicente Magsaysay and Jonahden Rep. Mitzi Magsaysay has been elected by President Macapagal-Arroyo as the 14-member board of the state-owned Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority as the province's private sector representative.

Critics

His appointment, made known only last week, was criticized by seniors in the freeport, notably Sen. Richard Gordon and Zambales Gov. Amor Deloso.

In separate interviews, Gordon and Deloso said the young Magsaysay had never held a job prior to his appointment as SBMA director.

Gordon said Republic Act No. 7227, or the Bases conversion law that also created the SBMA, has not been followed again to the case.

"The members of the [former Subic Naval Base] have been totally excluded," said Gordon, the first chair of the SBMA and former mayor of Olongapo City where much of the former base workers live.

He said former employees of the US military in the base's shipyards, public works and naval centers should have representatives in the SBMA board to ensure the "continuity of the vision."

The law gave bases conversion agencies, mainly the Bases Conversion Development Authority, priority to convert Subic, Clark, Camp John Hay and several former American base lands into productive lands and make the progress to those benefited to those formerly dependent on the US bases.

"I was really disturbed by it," he said of Magsaysay's appointment, adding that he has not talked with them (Deloso).

The governor said he was "upset."

Contribution

"I don't know what the boy would contribute to the SBMA when he has not done any job in his life," Deloso said.

SBMA Chair Feliciano Salonga on Wednesday confirmed that Magsaysay had joined the board, the policy-making body of the SBMA.

MAGSAYSAY

Magsaysay replaced his father, Jesse Victor, who missed last for Zambales governor in the May 14 elections. His grandfather, former Gov. Vicente Magsaysay, also has in his ancestral list.

"[Magsaysay] was appointed by our President. She wrote us a letter for Jobs to join the board," Salonga said in a phone interview.

He said the young Magsaysay had attended two board meetings this month.

Reached by phone, Magsaysay said his SBMA office was on the second job he has held in his life. The first was as political affairs officer in his mother's congressional office.

"I ran the office and I took that job seriously," he said.

Magsaysay said he finished AB Political Science at the Ateneo de Manila University, where he is also taking up a master's degree in public management.

"I'm young but I'm capable for the job. As a director, I think I can do sound decision-making. With strong belief on anything we marvel (I have not been misused by any wrongdoing)," he told the Inquirer.

Fast learner

"I am really a fast worker. I am learning more by meeting on matters (I learn fast). I have been observing how (other directors) are answering. Insured do rather (I'm really trying to learn)," he said.

Magsaysay said he should not be perceived as someone riding on the name of his father.

"I want to said, I will ask my elders for advise but the decision-making will be mine," he said.

Age, according to him, should "never be an issue" because "there are many young people in government agencies and in Congress."

"My grandfather became governor when he was 26," he said.

He recalled Magsaysay and his brother Abi

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SMART
THE POWER TO LEAD

Aplus METRO
Editor Boots G. Chipeco

Banker grows edible weeds in Antipolo garden

By Prop B. Montealegre
Correspondent

WEEDS, THE NEMESIS OF gardeners, could be the key to eradicating malnutrition and hunger in Metro Manila and other urban areas.

And a banker who says she grows fresh air in her Antipolo garden on weekends, discovered this.

"Edible wild plant species should be an important part of the urban diet," said Vice Gomez Bartolo who grows weeds in her free-hectare hideaway right beside the Catedral Bamboo Garden in Antipolo City. "By growing them, we also grow fresh air," she added.

The property, a gift from her mother, Carolina L. Gomez, is a patch of paradise where wild plants and trees are growing.

Among the edible weeds in her garden are talinum (Talinum fruticosum or Talinum triangulare), kamias or carambola (Averrhoa bilimbi), duckweed or greenfield, alukon, parasol pancium (Peperomia pellucida), ferns or pako, sorgum, and the rare wild pipino (crawling miniature cucumber that promises to be a big hit once it is properly propagated).

There are also folk medicinal plants such as kamias cuba, hamon (tuturanon), sabila, lagundi, ambong, makahiya, alemong mata, tanglad or lemon grass, diwa and oship-oship.

Studies show that many edible wild plant species can be used to meet people's nutrient needs, especially that of groups at risk like children, pregnant or lactating women and the elderly.

Diet improvement

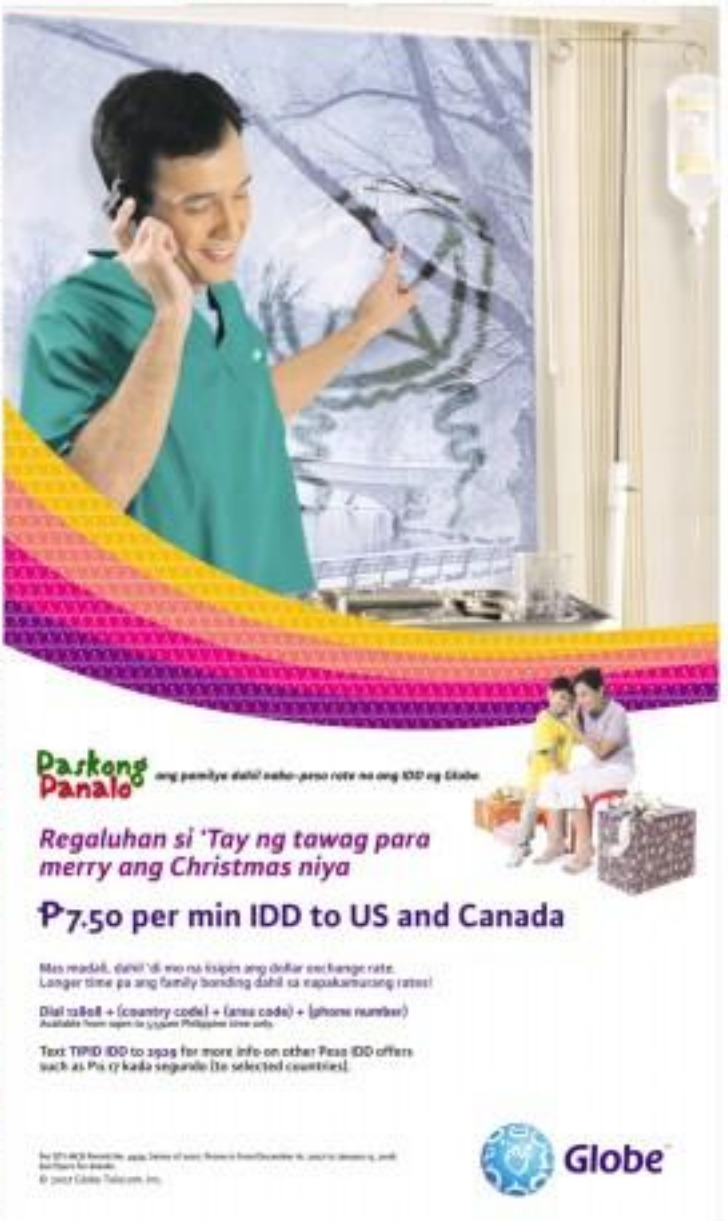
Lemon-lauwen edible plants deserve anonymous attention because they can help improve diets in many Third World countries, according to Louis E. Grivetti of the Department of Nutrition at the University of California and Brita M. Ogle of the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences who wrote an article titled "The Wild Plant Connection" in the Nutrition Research Review.

"Humans have sometimes starved in the midst of 'wild food plenty,'" Grivetti and Ogle said, pointing out that many families and societies have survived during times of crisis such as political conflicts, epidemics or famine by feeding on edible wild plants.

Organizations such as the World Wide Fund, International Institute for Environment and Development and the Swedish International Development Authority have reportedly been having for

BUSINESS A22

A HANGING bridge leads to the banker's "patch of paradise" in Antipolo City.



"EDIBLE wild plant species should be an important part of the urban diet," says Bartela who grows turmeric (lying down), bong gabot, watercress and other weeds in her garden.

Banker grows edible weeds …

From page A21

the inclusion of wild plant foods in urban agroforestry projects and regional food preservation curricula.

However, there are two major problems that need to be addressed first: Inadequate quantifiable data documenting the macro and micro-nutrient contributions of edible weeds to the diet, and the lack of standardized field and laboratory research methods, including proper identification of wild plant species.

Small laboratories

Some herbal and weed gardens have risen to the occasion by serving as small laboratories where the culinary uses and medicinal properties of diverse wild plants are under study.

Tarriela, Philippine National Bank chair, coauthored the book "Unsipa … Don't Throw Those Weeds Away" with three other plant lovers—Rhea Aquino-Liebenow, Carmen Gerardo Pamintuan and Nenita A. Ordoñez.

Published by The Store and Nature Society of the Philippines, it contains a list of weeds, shrubs, trees, vines, palms and roots that are found in the country, including their uses, propagation and care.

"Hoping Filipinos depot magazine [No Filipino should go hungry], "the authors say.

TARRIELA coauthored the book "Unsipa … Don't Throw Those Weeds Away."

Dalisay or Philippine spinach, which abounds in roadsides, disturbed areas and plantations, is a rich source of calcium, according to the article "Availability of Calcium in Some Philippine Vegetables" written by Adelaida D. Rivera and Clara Y. Lim in The Journal of Nutrition.

Edible ferns are a common delicacy but perhaps not many are aware of their high vitamin and mineral content. According to the website of the Food and Agriculture Organization, there are almost a thousand species of ferns in the Philippines that deserve further studies for their food value.

Most people think of pansit pancit as a "pest" but it makes a refreshing salad and healthy tea for the relief of urinary ailments, Tarriela said.

Visitors to her farm and garden are usually served Blushing Blooms—a Lebanese recipe which has salad greens topped with edible flowers from the wild cosmos plant, blue torenia and sedera dorsiv.

Gelovani and Ogle on the term "hidden harvest" to refer to the scourge of malnourishment and underscoring the nutritional and ecological roles of wild plants in local and regional food security.

Research efforts, from identification, propagation, nutritive analysis and recipe testing, call for collaboration with among growers, botanists, food technologists, nutritionists and culinary experts.

Idle or underused land in urban areas can be converted into sacred gardens where people can plant food free of artificial fertilizers and pesticides.

Filipinos would do well to keep in mind a favorite expression of the Ifuntocan Igdanos: "If wild plants good. Inform eat 'em and live long time."

EDIBLE weeds have helped people survive during lean times, according to experts.

ARE WEEDS the solution to malnutrition and hunger?

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2007

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

GLOBAL Pinoy

Editor Gerry Lirio

"[OFWs] are more than just a welcome Filipino workers, instead of reading over the so-called brain drain, 'we gain! And the Philippines has found its niche in globalization as a chief source of original labor." (AMBET QUEZADA JR./ABS-CBN, ANC ANALYST, January 2007)

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"Our country is dedicated to Filipinos overseas toiling on land and at sea, in factories, in construction sites and in the homes of the world, and whatever work can be motivated to secure a better life for their families. These are their stories.

RP's top liver doctor now in HK

By Blanche S. Rivera
Hong Kong correspondent

PATIENTS OR, dreams don't. So when Dr. Vanessa de Villa, one of the Philippines' leading experts in liver transplantation, moved to Hong Kong last year, her dream of establishing a liver transplant program in her own country was stuffed in her suitcases with the rest of her hopes for Filipino liver patients.

From the understaffed, under-funded Philippine General Hospital (PGH) in Manila, Dr. Villa is now part of a world-class team of surgeons at the Queen Mary Hospital (QMH) in Pok Fu Lam, like in the only Filipino doctor working full time at the QMH, a teaching center of the Hong Kong University, where Dr. Villa is a clinical assistant professor.

DR. VANESSA DE VILLA: Liver transplant is still too expensive for an average Filipino family

Liver surgery at P1 M

When she flew to Hong Kong last year, Dr. Villa left 11 liver patients awaiting transplants at the Philippines. Some have gone to Taiwan, where transplant cost is "cheaper" at around P3 million, and others to Singapore.

But others simply died. Those are the patients whose deteriorating condition overtook fundraising efforts to afford a new liver.

As in many other diseases, liver patients' time was much on their enemy as their labora-tory tests.

Some end-stage liver disease patients, upon learning that a transplant would require from P3 million to P6 million, co-top of the cost of lifetime medicines and periodic blood tests, re-signed to come back to the doctor assigned to death that comes soon enough.

"It's heartbreaking, but that's the reality," she said in an interview at the QMH.

Dr. Villa, however, had been more hopeful.

Fresh from a six-year stint in Spain, where she completed her residencies and participated in the development of the clinical liver transplant program of the University Clinic of Navarre, the Filipino doctor returned to Manila in 1995 with the goal of establishing a similar program for Filipino liver patients.

Helping liver patients

The intent, however, was not popular then, and Dr. Villa was forced to set aside her plans to focus instead on kidney transplantation, which was already being done at the Institute of Kidney and Transplant Institute in Quezon City.

In 1998, she left Manila for a fellowship at the Chang Gung Memorial Hospital in Kaohsiung, Taiwan where she became part of the liver surgery and liver transplantation program in the hospital's Department of Surgery.

Four years later, her enthusiasm returned. Dr. Villa returned to the Philippines and again attempted to start a liver transplant program, still in vain.

Hospitals in the Philippines were not willing to invest in the program because they felt that liver transplantation was a high-end treatment that Filipinos could not afford; hence, it would earn profit for private hospitals.

A hospital "starting from scratch" and wants to be at par with world standards in liver transplantation would need at least P65 million to get a liver transplant program going, Dr. Villa said.

"It's a very demanding specialty that requires high technical expertise. There were attempts to put up liver transplant programs, but they failed because of the lack of means and manpower," she said.

First liver transplant in RP

The first live donor liver transplant (LDLT) in Manila was performed in 1996 at the NKTI by a team from Taiwan assisted by Filipino surgeons, but the child died 40 days after the operation. A more recent LDLT was done at the PGH this year, but the patient also died three days after the operation.

The World Health Organization (WHO) in the Western Pacific region, which covers the Philippines as its member, accounts for half the global deaths due to hepatitis B. Everyday, 490 people or the region die from hepatitis-B-related causes, according to the WHO.

In the Philippines, one out of five populations or about eight million people are active hepatitis B carriers. Hepatitis B is the most common cause of liver cancer, the second most common cancer among Filipino men and the seventh among Filipino women.

Due to every 14,000 or 15,000 live births in the world has biliary atresia, a potentially lethal condition in which the person fails to develop an adequate pathway for bile to drain from the liver to the intestine. End-stage liver disease due to biliary atresia accounts for the majority of pediatric liver transplants globally.

Taiwan operation

Because Philippine hospitals could not support a liver transplant operation, Dr. Villa has had to bring her Filipino patients—mostly children from poor families who galvanized to raise the funds for years—to Taiwan for the actual surgery.

In January 2005, Dr. Villa came closer to doing a liver transplant in the Philippines courtesy of the joint programs of the Makati Medical Center and PGH, but the patient, 2-year old Kristine Luciano, became too weak to be operated on, and Dr. Villa's team did not proceed with the transplant.

Last year, Dr. Villa received an invite to join the QMH, whose liver transplant program rivals the best in the world.

"My thinking was: Hong Kong is near; I can help my patients from here," she said.

Three Filipino children—Louie Perez, Mark Wesley Cruz and Bif Balisan—have already undergone successful liver transplantation at the QMH since the Filipino doctor arrived in February 2006. The operation cost each of them around P8 million to P9 million.

"It's still too expensive for the average Filipino family. The wait and hunting someone is to start a program there (Philippines) and find a hospital to support it all the way," Dr. Villa said.

On those occasions, the doctor unpacks her yet unfulfilled dream for Filipinos with liver conditions.

"Eventually I want to go back to the Philippines. My dream really is to set up a sustainable program for liver transplantation there," she said.

(NOTE: Those who wish to help Filipino liver patients coming to Hong Kong may deposit their donations to HSBC (Hong Kong) current account no. 580-190681-001.)

Baguio entrepreneur's road to success began in Saudi Arabia

By Karla Jane R. Pineda
Contributor

Engineer Mario Jun' Alzona says he returned home from Dhahran with boxes full of photocopied books, and a new perspective on construction management

ALZONA in Saudi Arabia in 1986.

LOOKING BACK, CONSTRUCTION entrepreneur Mario 'Jun' Alzona Jr. says his road to success began in the deserts of Saudi Arabia, where he had gone in 1980 as an overseas contract worker.

Just recently named "Inspiring Baguio Entrepreneur" by the Philippine Center for Entrepreneurship and a recipient of the 2007 "Most Outstanding Businessmen Enterprises" award, now four years out of college and realizes now what he left was a dreamed corporate job when he decided to head for the Middle East.

Newport Corporation, one of the biggest mining companies operating in the country, had hired him as a staff member of its Engineering Design Department barely a week after he graduated from St. Louis University in 1976, with a degree in Mechanical Engineering.

But despite what seemed to be a rightful break for someone who ranked in the Top 20 in the B.E. board exam, Jun felt things were not really going his way.

"Almost four years I had passed without truly earning," says the [illegible] in his early 30s. He felt he did not grow fast enough in the company.

He finally tried working in other Philippine companies, including Supreme and Watertreat, which were involved in the construction of the Bataan Nuclear Plant.

Eventually, Jun landed a job to prepare planners and cost engineer for ARAMCO Overseas Company B.V. (Ltd Co.), another one-time Saudi Arabia Ltd., one of the largest contractors in the world at that time.

He stayed in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia for more than two years, working on million-dollar projects.

Jun now attributes most of his engineering knowledge to this break experience. It provided him exposure to other branches

BRAINS, A34

Christmas behind bars: Love begets love

By Evelyn Fiorenza
Contributor

A widow has been helping youth offenders experience a memorable Christmas in prison the past 24 years in Canada, feeling lucky that none of her four children had ever landed in jail.

THE AUTHOR is a December 2003 issue of The Vancouver Courier

IT WAS IN NOVEMber 1984 when I read the story about some young offenders at the Willingdon Youth Detention Centre committing suicide by hurting and slashing themselves. I was moved by the report written by Anne Rees and Barbara McLintock of the Province Newspaper. I did not waste any time visiting the Office of the Ombudsman who was investigating the report at that time. The Ombudsman gave me more information about the situations at the center and referred me to the director of the center, Gordon Hogg. I called the center and told Hogg about why I was calling and said that I would like to do something for the children at the center. Hogg told me he would get back to me. I waited for almost two weeks.

Oath of secrecy

Finally, I was called in come to Hogg's office, which I did right away, to hear what he had to say. I was questioned about my real intentions and what I was planning to do for the children. I said that I was a widow with four teenagers, felt lucky that despite being a single mom and a full-time employee, none of my four children ever landed in jail. Saying that I was sincere to my intentions, the director read some notes about what is required of someone to be involved with children at the center. He asked me if I understood those requirements, and I readily replied "Yes." I took the oath of secrecy administered by the director. Driving back home I started planning the first Christmas at Willingdon Youth Detention Centre. I was excited and anxious to begin.

There were 67 children, the majority of whom were boys. They were supervised by their security guards as we had the "help-yourself dinner" by the hallway. You could tell everyone felt at home, they were in happy saying that the food and drinks were different from the daily meals in prison. Almost all the food was eaten. We had a short program, after which the children were sent back to their cells. I announced that I would be back the next morning with their gifts. When I arrived home, I started putting the cookbooks, playing cards, sports magazines, comics, chocolates and greeting cards in the bags for 70 children. There were barely enough goodies for the gift bags.

First ever Christmas gift

On Christmas morning, I asked my son Ernest to come and help me bring the gifts to the center. When we arrived, the security guards were waiting to take us to each cell where the children were asked in line up to receive their gift. As I handed them their bags, I gave them a hug and while I patted those tough words "I love you."

I remember one 12 year-old boy who received his bag first. He wanted for a chance to talk to me. When everyone had gotten their presents, this young boy approached, gave me a hug and said "Thank you very much, Evelyn, this is the first time I ever received a Christmas present in my life." I did not know that he got a cheap watch in his bag. We went to the next cell, where the boys were waiting for their turn, gave them their gift bags and finally, the cell where the children with chalk marks on their arms, legs and faces were staying. What a night! I looked at the security guards and they looked back with approval indicating that I was OK.

Electrified

Time by now the boys came forward in their names were called. This time Ernest handed the gift bags while I hugged and whispered, "I love you" to the boys. I felt a different sensation in their body as each one hugged me back. I felt electrified. What a feeling!— Maybe they had not had a chance to be hugged by their own parents. I was number when they each thanked me. There was silence in the car when we were going home.

Finally Ernest said, "Mommy, you gave those children a beautiful Christmas." I was in tears all the way home.

For 24 years since then, I have been Santa Claus to prison for the least fortunate children who are victims of circumstances beyond their control. Christmas is a season of sharing and caring; the many beautiful donors, volunteers, staff and special guests have shared with me the true meaning of Christmas with their generous moral support. We have really touched and made a difference in the lives of those young children so shown by the gratitude on their faces.

Another year, another ray of hope

IMFO
Lourdes Sawyer Zaucerico

MANY SKILLED NURSES and other workers are still in the Philippines despite the approval of their employment petitions and all are asking why no visas are being issued to them. Professionals and skilled workers are also at a loss on why no H1B visas are available despite valid job offers from US employers.

Members of the US Congress have different opinions on the issue. Democrats blame the Bush administration for its inaction on the matter. Republicans on the other hand, blame the Democrats in the US Congress for the delay in the approval of the bill.

What are we really looking at in terms of immigration policy in the United States for the coming year? Will it continue the current border policy or is legislation of 12 million undocumented immigrants already in the US?

The year that was

When the 110th US Congress opened in January 2007, our hopes were high that the Democratic-dominated Congress would support the passage of the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act. Bills were introduced in both houses of Congress proposing a comprehensive immigration reform.

When the proposed bill was heard on the Senate committee, there was a very strong opposition to the bill by Conservative legislators. The proposed Comprehensive Immigration Reform bill was found index. In both houses the bill was defeated. The US Senate killed the bill that was supposed to provide the much-needed amendments for a broken US immigration system.

Some of the beginnings of this year, unexpected as it and there were no more visas for registered nurses. There was actually a very strong advocacy in the Comprehensive Immigration Reform bill to exempt all registered nurses from the US visa limitations. However, when the proposed Comprehensive Immigration Reform bill was killed in Congress, the prospect to get more visas for US-bound nurses also died with it. There are thousands of registered nurses who are currently waiting for their visas. Unless there is a fiat to the quota set for skilled workers, the registered nurses continue to face the adverse effects of re-migration.

Although it has always been the policy of the US to attract the skilled workers, there is for some reason for the skilled workers to come to the US without facing a long delay. The H1B professional working visas are limited to only 65,000 visas per year. On April 1, 2007, the first day of filing for H1B petitions and workers, the visa quota was met when more than 150,000 applications were received by the US Immigration Service. Thus, more than 85,000 applications had to be returned to the petitioning employers from the US visa limitations. However, when the proposed Comprehensive Immigration Reform bill was killed in Congress, the prospect to get more visas for US-bound nurses also died with it. There are thousands of registered nurses who are currently waiting for their visas. Unless there is a fiat to the quota set for skilled workers, the registered nurses continue to face the adverse effects of re-migration.

Family petitions by Filipino World War II veterans were also affected lack of action on the Comprehensive Immigration Reform bill. A special legislation was introduced by veterans' supporters in Congress proposing that family petitions by the aging Filipino veterans be considered from the visa quotas limit making visas immediately available to their families. Again, this proposed immigration legislation has not yet passed in the US Congress.

Hope or despair?

Next year, there will be more law enforcers awaiting under the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). There was an increase in the filing fee applications and there will be more increases in the visa applications as well. With the money they raise, a big percentage of this is going to be used for more enforcement activities and more raids by ICE. Unfortunately, we do not see much improvement in the way the visas are being issued. In fact, it is still taking several months for FBI background checks causing delays in adjudication of applications.

There will always be challenges and opportunities to those who search for it. Despite the poor outlook, there will always be a ray of hope for those who are to come. There is nothing worse than the racial oppression suffered by earlier migrants to the US and it puts a proper perspective to the improvements that have already been made since then. With the IRCA experience just getting worse because of a lack of skilled workers, it is hoped that the US Congress can not continue to ignore a fix for the lack of visas.

As an immigrant advocate, I have to keep my passion for advancing immigration law alive and continue to hope for better immigration legislation next year. Hope that existing immigration legislation reflects the wisdom behind US immigration law which is to recognize democratic and basic family unity as US immigration.

Lourdes Sawyer may be reached at lsawyerzaucerico.com or at 02-887-7777.)

Baguio entrepreneur's road to success began in Saudi

Story on page A15

of engineering.

American way

"I'm a mechanical engineer but I was given a chance to work another path, which was more on civil engineering. I also learned construction management, the American way, which up to now, has been a key advantage in running my business," said Jun, who has since attended an international management seminar in Europe.

And because there was nothing much to do in Saudi after work hours, Jun found himself photocopying construction books shelved in his office, hoping to learn every thesis behind the tasks he did.

"Knowing materials was fine in the office as I grabbed the opportunity to widen my lateral edge," he recalled. "When I went back home, I didn't bring a TV set, instead I brought home full of photocopied books."

Back in Baguio, Jun was dead set on setting up his own business. In 1992, he teamed up with another fellow engineer who had also worked in Saudi, Ernesto Sison. The partnership was called E. C. Ilaya Construction.

This eventually became the engineering, contracting and retail estate developing company ALPA-PGM, Inc.

Mormon church...parks

He remembers their first job was to complete a two-hectare building for the Philippine Military Academy that a previous contractor had left unfinished.

They worked hard on every job. From Mormon churches to memorial parks and subdivisions. At first, the company's own Le Trinidad office was constructed without need of a bank loan, he said.

Jun has since established several other companies: Calapp (Philippines) Inc., Sagbad Marketing & Management Corp., Sisiwa Development Corp., 2000 Cordillera Structures and Development Corp., and his most recent, Ecumenic Elevators Inc., a still-native company which is now emerging as a strong player in the local industry.

His 17-page resume now mentions that he was a past president and director of the Baguio Chamber of Commerce and Industry, as well as the Rotary Club of Baguio South.

Model for today's youth

His recognition as "Inspiring Baguio Entrepreneur" by the Philippine Center for Entrepreneurship, was part of the Go Negosyo Teen Edition, which holds him up as a model for today's youth.

Jun is also associated with various organizations like the International Real Estate Federation, South Luzon Area of the Philippine Habitat Business Council, Association for Planning and Housing, and Baguio Intergovernment organizations (BIMROD) Multi-sectoral Council.

In addition, Jun has formed a foundation of his own, the Philippine Entrepreneurs Service Organization (Pesc), which aims to support small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs).

"I see the future of the country's economy in SMEs," says the softspoken ORW-turned-millionaire, sitting comfortably behind his office desk in a casual yellow shirt and blue jeans.

The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Quirez

Bhutto slay may signal trouble for Musharraf

By David Rohde

FORMER PRIME MINISTER BENAZIR BHUTTO'S death raises the specter of prolonged political conflict between Pakistan's president, Pervez Musharraf, and the country's opposition, according to Pakistani and American analysts. How he handles the next several days could determine whether nationwide antigovernment protests erupt.

"I see a lot more trouble for Musharraf in the near future," said Imtiaz Ashan Nizvi, a leading Pakistani political analyst.

Bhutto's party, the largest in the country, is more headstrong, and many of its members already blame Musharraf's government for her death.

Musharraf remains deeply unpopular after declaring a state of emergency in November and suppressing Bhutto and his other political opponents.

Meanwhile, Senator Sharif, another prominent opposition leader, is scrambling to reorganize his party.

Here versus outside in the coming days and weeks lies largely in the hands of Musharraf, Bhutto's husband and Sharif, according to Pakistani analysts. But it is Musharraf who faces the largest geostrategic challenge.

Analysts said the senseless act could hurt Musharraf politically and place him in one of the most difficult positions of his turbulent eight years in power.

At the core of Musharraf's problems is a widespread perception that he did too little to protect Bhutto or that his government carried out the killing itself, analysts said.

Demonstrations are expected to peak at Bhutto's funeral on Friday outside Bhutto's Pir Pahwal. Asif Ali Zardari, could call for national strike further protests.

If Musharraf declares a state of emergency to win in presence, he is likely to meet stronger popular opposition than he did when he declared emergency powers to November, analysts said.

If Musharraf proceeds with parliamentary elections scheduled for Jan. 8, he is likely to encounter street protests as well. Analysts said that holding the election would be worse as no effort by him to take advantage of Bhutto's death.

Pakistani has Bhutto's party the Pakistan People Party will struggle to compete effectively in the elections. Bhutto was the party's chairperson for life and tightly controlled to functions, analysts said.

After Bhutto was killed, Sharif announced that his party would withdraw from the elections. Visiting the hospital where Bhutto was pronounced dead, Sharif vowed to assume her mantle as the main leader of the opposition to Musharraf. AFP

JOHN Cosgrove (left) helps a woman shred papers on Dec. 29 in New York. Prime cellular telephones to phones of an Exercise or husbands, people disappointed by the passed year threw away the bad memories of 2007 into a shredding machine installed in Times Square. AFP

New Yorkers invited to shred '07 regrets

NEW YORK—RIDE OF FOUR years memories of 2007: an ex-boyfriend, a bad medical report, stacks of unpaid bills.

On Friday, the embarrassed and regretful lined up with phone and documents that triggered such regrets into a giant shredder in Times Square, where a 40-yard garbage truck waited to eat them all forever.

"I had liberated!" exclaimed Elodia Jackson after dicing a picture of her ex-fiance with his new girlfriend into the industrial-size machine.

The 25-year-old home health aide said she found the picture on his MySpace page after going e-mail from the girlfriend informing her that "I'm his new woman; I sure him alone."

For those who entered empty-handed, the people at the Times Square Business Alliance provided stationery to write down their regrets.

Maggie Weber, 55, visiting from Ecuador, united the support unity to banish three unpleasant thoughts: her high cholesterol, high blood pressure and bills.

For daughter, Geraldine Weber, 36, wrote down the name of her husband. Does whom she hopes to be divorced by next year.

For those who brought items that could not be shredded, a disposal-minder was provided.

Jan Cornelia of frozen lasagna and it be destroyed a old garbage can from his kitchen with no opening too narrow to escape his plate.

"My wife and I always argue about it," he said. "So she said, if I get her a new trash can, I can shred this one."

Alan Manevitz, a psychiatrist at New York Presbyterian Hospital-Weill Cornell Medical Center, said such bumbling rituals can be helpful.

"In many cultures, people are able to confess and submit their regrets," he said. "And there's a point in time when you can forgive yourself and turn a new page."

Tim Tompkins, president of the business group that organized the event, said he got the idea from a roommate who told him about a New Year's tradition of scribbling bad memories on a piece of paper, then stuffing it into a can and burning it.

"New York is always about looking back, about reflection, but it's also about renewal, looking forward and living a lot of things," he said. AP

Japan dailies welcome thawing of ties with China

TOKYO—JAPANESE NEWSPAPERS praised the thawing of ties between Japan and China following Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda's visit to Beijing and despite a simmering dispute over maritime gas fields.

The influential daily Asahi Shimbun hailed the four-day trip as successful and pointed to a "leap forward" in bilateral ties between the Asian powers.

"The time has come when we can talk about the 'leap for word,'" the newspaper said in an editorial referring to a phrase that Fukuda has used.

China cut high-level ties with Japan during the 2005-2006 premiership of Junichiro Koizumi due to his visits to Tokyo's Yasukuni Shrine, which enshrines war criminals who invaded China, alongside another 2.5 million war dead.

But Fukuda and his predecessor, Shinzo Abe, have stepped away from the shrine, paving the way for the dramatic thaw in bilateral relations that will be capped when Chinese President Hu Jintao visits Japan next year.

Fukuda, on his first visit to China since taking office in September, separately met with Wen and Hu on Friday as the two nations pledged to build on their rapidly-warming ties.

The leaders held five hours of talks and agreed to cooperate on trade, climate change and other fields but the dispute over the gas fields was unresolved.

WORK PARTNERS PLAY CATCH...Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda (right) and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao laugh after they played catch with a baseball in Beijing's Diaoyutai State Guesthouse on Dec. 29. REUTERS

"There was no settlement in the issue of gas fields in the East China Sea. But there is no reason to be pessimistic. It is quite natural that positing issues exist that we solved just by tallying (the)," Asahi said.

The leading business daily Nikkei was more skeptical.

Although it agreed "top level diplomacy" appeared back on track, it lamented that "the pending issue over gas fields has been virtually put off."

Eleven rounds of negotiations since 2004 have made little progress, with China rejecting the maritime border which Japan considers a starting point for discussions.

"Although nearly five million people from Japan and China visit each other's country every year nowadays, mutual confidence in a true sense has not been enhanced," Nikkei reasoned. "We wish to see a first step in a 'leap forward' in Japan-China relations through steady exchanges at various levels." AFP

Australian 'Taliban' released from jail

ADELAIDE, AUSTRALIA—FORmer Guantanamo Bay inmate David Hicks walked free from an Australian jail after completing a sentence for supporting terrorism yesterday, vowing not to let down those who got him home.

More than six years after he was captured in Afghanistan, the 32-year-old "home Taliban" was escorted from Adelaide's maximum security prison just past a media throng broadcasting live images of his release.

It was the public's first chance to see the 32-year-old former Muslim convert, who became the only detainee held at the controversial Guantanamo Bay military base in Cuba to be convicted over terrorism charges.

HICKS facing uncertainty of the Kerala high security prison in Adelaide on Dec. 29. -

Wearing jeans and a green polo top and appearing shaken but not broken, Hicks refused his captors to late 2001, a soulful, Hicks met supporters and was immediately driven to an undisclosed location.

Hicks' lawyer David McLeod read a statement on his behalf which said he was looking forward to "quiet time" with his family and friends. AFP

Beijing says free elections possible in HK in 2017

HONG KONG—CHINA STUNNED not half democracy for Hong Kong in 2012 on Saturday, ignoring the majority opinion in the former British colony, but said it may pick its leader by universal suffrage in the following opportunity, in 2017.

Full democracy for forming Hong Kong's legislature would follow in 2020, the standing committee of China's parliament, the National People's Congress (NPC), said.

Chief Executive Donald Tsang welcomed the ruling, saying it of fered an opportunity and that Hong Kongers should shelve their differences and work together to hammer out the details.

But the city's vocal pro-democracy camp, a key voting block in the legislative council, was disappointed at what it saw as yet another delay. It organized a protest that drew a few hundred people to grounds outside the historic legislative building and they then marched in downtown Hong Kong.

"The main concession this hard earned opportunity" Tsang told reporters. "I sincerely urge everybody to lay down all dangerous events and start moving toward consultation and consensus."

The decision to rule out 2012 was effectively the NPC's second veto of a possible date for universal suffrage after a 2004 ruling that quashed hopes for full elections in 2007.

However, the NPC's statement that Hong Kong "may" have universal suffrage in 2017—the 20th anniversary of Hong Kong's return to British rule—marked Beijing's clearest indication yet as to when full democracy might finally permeate.

Democratic legislators have been calling for a timetable for democracy but Ivan Choy lawmaker Audrey Eu said the pledge to consider full democracy in 2017 was not a promise to deliver it.

"It's an extremely disappointing decision," she said.

"A lot of people accentuate on the reference to 2017 and think there's hope, but to say you may have universal suffrage in that year doesn't mean it's going to happen ... there's no guarantee that it would be raised again." Reuters

One year after, Saddam hanging seen as false start for new Iraq

By Sylvia Briand

BAGHDAD—BRINGING SADDAM Hussein to book for the crimes of his regime was supposed to symbolize the beginning of the rule of law after decades of tyranny, but instead his hanging a year ago on Sunday drew accusations of victors' justice.

Footage captured on a mobile telephone of his executioners taunting him before putting him to death sparked criticism even from the US opponents of Iraq's new Shiite-led government.

Yet the Sunni Arab minority that provided the bedrock of Saddam's support, the hanging movie's chosen of the name of a Shiite leader whose militia has become a symbol of fear since the 2003 invasion leads the ire of sensation seems like an act of sectarian retribution.

"It was certainly naive to believe that a court setup under American occupation could lay the foundations stone of this sort of new justice system and democratic regime that Iraq had never previously known," said Baghdad university professor Nabil Mohammed Yasin.

In a country whose political history has been punctuated by coups, assassinations and wars over since independence in 1932, "things take time to change," said Yasin.

However "Iraq's new leaders were desperate to be rid of Saddam who remained a threat to their newfound power as long as he remained alive."

An Iraqi teacher who would give only his first name Omar said that the hanging of Saddam had been widely regarded by Iraqis as sectarian revenge.

"The humiliating execution was not viewed as the just punishment of a dictator but as an act of revenge by the Shiite government against the Sunnis who dominated the former Saddam party," he said.

The hanging at the start of the Muslim festival of Eid al-Adha had further deepened the rift between Sunnis and Shiites opened up by the bombing of a revered Shiite shrine by suspected al-Qaeda militants in February last year, he added.

Under the Muslim calendar, the anniversary of the execution has already passed more than a week ago. Saddam was hanged just minutes before the start of Eid al-Adha which lasts in Muslims this year celebrated on Dec. 19.

To mark the day, dozens of Sunni supporters gathered at Saddam's graveside in his home village of Tarja, near the central city of Tikrit, to lay flowers and pay their respects.

Even US President George W Bush, who backed Saddam's capture in late 2003, sharply criticized the manner of his execution.

Iran's interview with PBS television on Jan. 16 he said the hanging resembled a sectarian "revenge killing" and had made it harder to end the deadly violence gripping Iraq.

Bush said the execution had "reverberated around the world," about Iraq Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki and made it clear that his fledgling government "has still got some maturation to do."

The US president said he had been "pleased" with the trials of Saddam and other top aides, who were also executed, but that the Iraqi government "fumbled" in carrying out the death sentence against Saddam. AFP

WORLD-CLASS PINOYS,

PINARANGALAN NG BAGONG BAYANI FOUNDATION, INC. AT NG GLOBE

Pangungusap ito ni kongresadutan ng timabakasan. Pag-isa sa 'di kilalang bansa.

Isa lang sa mga hamong hinaharap araw-araw ng mga kababayan nating OFWs. Ngunit sa gitna ng kahirapang ito, tunay po ring pinapatunayan ng atíng mga kababayan ang kakayanihan ng dugong Pilipino.

At ang kakayanihang yan ang ipinagpupunyagi ng Bagong Bayani Awards na ginanap noong ika-12 ng Disyembre sa Palasyo ng Malacañang kung saan isa-isang kinamusta ni Pangulong Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo ang mga natatanging kasama sina Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Secretary Arturo Brion at Bagong Bayani Foundation, Inc. President Capt. Gregorio Oca.

Pagkatapos nito, nagpunta rin sa Association of Marine Officers & Seamen Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP) sa Intramuros, Manila ang mga nanalo, kung saan iginawad sa kanila ang kani-kanilang mga parangal.

Layunin ng Bagong Bayani Awards na kilalanin ang mga kalangi-langing kontribusyon, serbisyo at tulong ng mga Pinoy OFWs sa kanilang mga komunidad, kapamilya at sa bansa.

Mayroong apat na kategorya ang Bagong Bayani Awards: ang Bagong Bayani Award for Outstanding Employee, Community Service, Culture and the Arts at ang Blas F. Ople Award para sa Natatanging Bagong Bayani.

Blas F. Ople Award para sa
Natatanging Bagong Bayani
Mary Jane Pajarillo–Tupas, 41, Saudi Arabia
Director of Nursing

Patunay ang unanimous na nominasyon mula sa Philippine Labor Office sa Al-Khobar, mula sa kanyang amo at mga katrabaho sa Meharenial Glessury Hospital sa Saudi Arabia ang dedikasyon ng Director of Nursing na si Pajarillo–Tupas. Aktibo sa mga medical mission at socio-civic activities, nakumbinsi rin niya ang ospital sa reaglagay ng library gamot at tulong sa mga OFWs sa loobaw ng kanilang mga area.

Lahat ng mga kwento nila, iisa lang ang kan patunayan. Na sa harap ng anuhang hamon, ang dugong Pilipino ay dugong Bayani. Kaya tuloy-tuloy ang suporta ng Bagong Bayani Foundation, Inc., DOLE, POEA, OWWA, Globe at iba pang mayambra ng pribadong sektor sa lahat ng OFWs, saan man sila mapunan. Sa pamamagitan ng dun't ibang serbisyo at produkto, napakadali na para sa Pinoy na maabot ang mundo. Binabatin ang para sa kanyagtagang impormasyon.

BLAS F. OPLE AWARD PARA SA NATATANGING BAGONG BAYANI

BAGONG BAYANI AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING EMPLOYEE

CHITHEL CARMONA, 29, KUWAIT
SUPERINTENDENT

VIVE DE RAIN, 38, BRUNEI
EDUCATION OFFICER

EDGARDO GULMATICO, 53, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
SENIOR HOUSE PLANT MANAGER

JOSEFINA VILLARES, 66, KUWAIT
PERSONAL SECRETARY

ROLANDO OLAMPOT, 53, SAUDI ARABIA
RESTAURANT MANAGER

CAPT. CONSTANTE GERON CAMPS, 48, SEAFARER

JESSE SUMOOD, 39, SEAFARER

and HAZEL REPOSO, 39, USA, SERVICE WORKER

BAGONG BAYANI AWARD FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE

ROBERTO ABELLA, 62, LIBYA
SENIOR ENGINEER

BAGONG BAYANI AWARD FOR CULTURE AND THE ARTS

FRANCISCO ROQUE, 59, KUWAIT
LANDSCAPE ENGINEER

RICHARD GABRIEL, 52, FINLAND
SCULPTOR

Globe

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Sunday SPORTS
Editor Teddyboy S. Molmisa Assistant Editor Francis T. J. Ochoa

Perfection foiled

Harbour Centre ends Hapee dream run, forges decider

TY TANG (right) and his Batang Pier bring Evan Gagnidze and the Complete Protectors to their knees.

By Jasmine W. Payo

HAPEE'S BID FOR A PERfect ending wasn't over within arms' reach.

Harbour Centre ended Hapee's spectacular 22-game winning streak with a commanding second-half performance for a 77-59 win yesterday to forge a winner-take-all PBL Vice Governor Energy Drink Cup championship showdown.

Edwin Asoro took charge in a key third-quarter run to finish open a three-point lead to comfortable 66-54 cushion with 6:30 remaining in the best-of-three finals series at the Rizal Memorial Coliseum.

"Those who played it-out in the first game all stepped up," said Batang Pier coach Jorge Gallent.

The rest of Batang Pier's side ran the show as Asoro, who shot a game-high 20 points, created via a 7-0 surge that gave Harbour Centre a 61-52 upend breaking into the final five minutes.

Rollie Ilo Harbour Centre chief hopes to close a piece of history by clinching it in impressive-fashion in straight sweeps in the final game of their series at 3 p.m. at the Rizal Memorial Coliseum.

Gallent said a well-prepared Batang Pier showed up to spoil the Complete Protectors' campaign for a flawless season.

"Our Adjustment was on their pick and roll," he said. "We avoided stop their pick and roll in Game 1 that's why Reed (Arnaldo) had 21 points. We pleased to minimize Reed, to bring his point output down."

Arnaldo, who had 21 points in Harper's 72-69 Game 1 victory, went scoreless in the final period after scoring 13 in the first three quarters.

The Complete Protectors had trouble getting off decent shots, with Harwood carrying most of the scoring load in the final frame.

"We also practiced their box-and-one, that was their adjustment in the first game," said Gallent. "We had plays for their box-and-one."

Sebastian Mercado, the Filipino guard who bungled crucial free throws in Game 1, made up for the boo-boo with 18 markers, six boards, four assists and five steals.

Nat'l divers off to China

By Marc Anthony Reyes

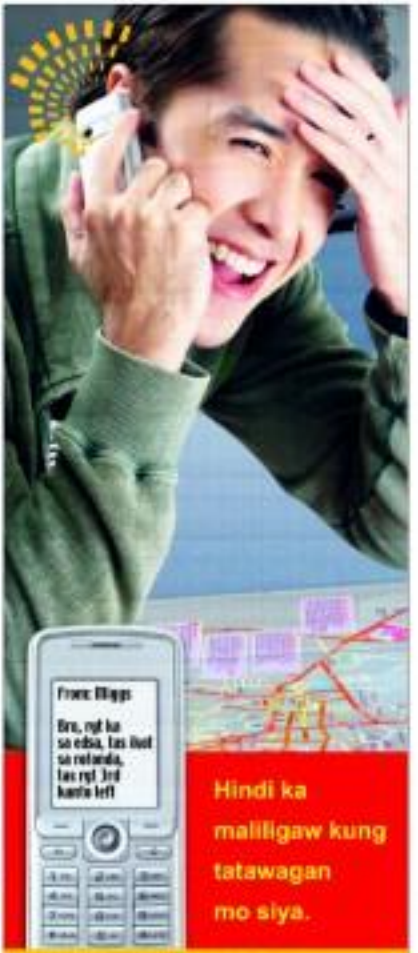
FIVE NATIONAL DIVERS LED BY SOUTHeast Asian Games golden girl Sheila Mae Perez will fly to China on Jan. 3 to start their six-month training and preparation for the Int'l Olympic-qualifying events.

Perez, 22, will spearhead the 4-man team of a campaign-A of 2007 SEA Games gold medalists Junior Ayok and Nilo Garcia, and silver winners Arnie Bilolo and Zaida Dominico, according to head coach Rommel Bong.

Arriving Beijing in Jan. 03 to Wuhan province we continued coach Laurence Quirong and Chinese master Zhang Dow, who has been credited for the growth of Philippine diving starting with the 2005 SEA Games when the country won five gold medals.

Sun City Games for its centuries-old town scene, is also the debuting ground for a world-class diving, including reigning Olympic champion Xiao Long.

Bong said they will travel to six weeks there before returning for Shalom Cup in the Manila Cup of diving in February.



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Parental Maintenance

INQUIRER

THE YEAR THAT WAS

Billiards fails to take its cue

PHILIPPINE BILLIARDS should have taken its cue from a fruitful 2006. Instead, the year 2007 became the calendar equivalent of scratches and dry breaks.

Basically, the year got off on the right foot for the country's pool sharks with Efren "Bata" Reyes hauling in 2-2-3 finish for the Philippines in the Cebu City Classic Master of the Table Tennis last January in Louisville, Kentucky.

Compatriots Rodolfo "Boy Sarimot" Luat and Francisco "Django" Bustamante completed the Filipino contingent.

But everything seemed downhill afterward from thereon.

From the nation-hopping Asian Tour series to the prestigious World Pool Championship, Philippine fans struggled mightily against a foreign field that used to be cowed by their pervasive dominance.

Ronnie Alcano gave the Philippines its brightest spot, winning the World 8-ball title in March, allowing him to hold at the same time world titles in both 8- and 9-ball events.

It was actually the second 8-ball crown for the 34-year-old leader (no relation to Efren Reyes).

Reyes, considered by many as the greatest pool player of all time, was the first Filipino to hold the world 8-ball title and the world 9-ball crown at the same time.

Alcano, who battled charges of child abuse in the middle of the year, also won the 8-ball event in the Dick Swanhoon Asian Games.

Reyes, meanwhile, had a mixed bag in international wear, finishing second in the Predator's World 9-Ball Championship in Taipei, Taiwan; the last to Xiao Ting Pan of China in the finals to settle for the $10,000 runners-up prize.

Still, Reyes savored the biggest win in the tournament where she claimed the scalp of five-time champion Allison Fisher and two-time winner Ga Young Kim of South Korea in the early rounds.

Despite the success of Alcano and Reyes, billiards fans had their eyes on the Asian Tour and the World Pool Championship that the country was going to host.

Wiped out

As it turned out, there was little to look forward to.

After sweeping the tour last year, the 10-player ballet to stay atop the ship.

The country went to host players in the nation-hopping tour although Reyes, a multiple leg and three-time overall tour champion, didn't join along with Bustamante because of sponsorship duties.

The two are endorsers of the San Miguel Corp., a rival company of Cojuangco—the tour's title sponsor this year.

Luc Yuen Cuenca bowed to Chang Jung-ling, 8-13, in the opening leg at the Indonesia Open in Jakarta, Indonesia.

They were native to the tour's grand final at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in Bali, Indonesia with Jung regaining his supremacy over Cuenca, 13-8.

In between the Indonesian stops, the Filipinos failed to even reach the finals of the tour they dominated in the first four years.

"I don't know what to say to the team," said SBLP president Ernesto "Ernie" Fajardo. "I guess the lure of overseas caught up with us."

In the PBC, the talented Filipino pool players had no problem smashing the ball in major tournaments all season.

But they somehow found it hard to go over it.

Superman

A new name rose in the PBC with Roberto Gomez, nicknamed Superman, eliminated one-favored foreign foe after another to reach the finals of the tournament and beat the 50-game bogey of a victory on home soil.

In his path stood Englebirtan Daryl Peach.

If ever there was any omen pointing to a disastrous finish, it was one seemingly trivial fact: Peach is dealerpiger for Superman archenemies Lou Luthen.

Gomez lost a nerve final, 17-15, one where it became apparent that the sixth set would be the competence with the best mistakes.

"The nerves got the better of me," admitted Gomez. "I felt bad because I know that I let my countrymen down. But I'll make sure to make up for it in future events."

Perhaps the person who imitated RP billiards' failures the most was the top-ranked Byrne.

The long-time icon of the sport everywhere in the world failed to make a dent after a strong run last year.

He was on the last year, winning two legs and the overall championship in the Asian Tour, and claiming the title and the $100,000 top prize in the International Pool Tour.

He also combined with teammates to cop the inaugural World Cup of Pool.

But nagging pains on his fingers and occasional shaking of hands proved too much to handle for the game's living legend.

He crashed out in the first round of the knockout phase in the PBC. He and Bustamante also bowed to eventual winners Ga Hwan and Fu Jian-bo of China in the quarterfinals of the World Cup of Pool.

Billiards officials can only hope that next year will be a easier one for the sport.

Marlon Bernardino, Contributor

HE COULD have ended up a caster for the Philippine campaign at the World Pool Championships. But Baher is Ginoel, left, is the finals in Englebirtan Daryl Peach.

Long wait in caddy house ends for new RP team stars

By Hussey R. Castillo

JUST THREE YEARS AGO, A MOMand day for three young men started with a long wait in the caddy house—as they called their regular players or an own longer wait in a queue with over 100 other bag-toters.

Those days, a typical day for Jonel Abalos and Mark Fernando would start at the caddy house of the Caluna gate in Batangas—just to wait for play. Or, when they can't get the bags and their coin saddles to prepare for their daily practice.

Former caddies Abalos and Fernando have gone from mere with the bag in the eyes of the shots. They are just two of the newest hero who, in a way of speaking, are every Philippine team hopes on their shoulders.

"It hit has changed. Before, I saw golf as a livelihood, now I see it as a career," Abalos, the reed chin first runner of the National Caddies Open, told the keynote in Filipino. "In those days, I really didn't expect that I would ever get out of it (caddying)."

Abalos made the National team together with Fernando when the governing National Golf Association of the Philippines opened a press to almost everyone who could play decently. They, in the process, became the first products of the NGO to achieve the feat.

"The door has suddenly been opened for us," Fernando, a 26-year-old father of three who has a rich golf lineage, said in Filipino. "The feature has suddenly become boundless, now we are looking at a different career path."

The two represented the Philippines for the first time in the Amateurs Cup in Taiwan in October before playing in the Davis Cup here and the Southeast Asian Games in Thailand earlier this month, coming up with performances that convinced them to go pro at the end of the year.

"So long as we can keep this team

FERNANDO

together, Fernando and Nathaniel Bautista being the other members), I promise you we will win the SEA Games gold medal like once this year 2009 in Laos," Calos Gamboletta, who also paved the squad to a silver medal finish in Thailand, said.

"The talent is there. We don't just need to come up with other things in the program but to just continuously train the players we have," he added.

The Philippines finished ninth in the Asia Cup with Abalos striding up as the best Filipino performer while Fernando was fortified to the Philippines' second place finish to Thailand in the Paine Cup.

Bautista, also a former caddy who found his way into the national team via a different route, tied for fourth place individually to the SEAG.

"I have said this before, and I will say it again, the caddies will be the future of Philippine golf," Tommy Manotoc, the former Puma Cup star who helped bankroll the NGO program together with sportsman businessman Ramon Ang, said.

"Now that we have opened our eyes to it, we will start reaping the fruits of our labor."

The NGO is actually a low-budget program that now has 16 players, all of whom are being exposed to the toughest competitions here, like the PGA tour in Baguio and the Asia-old Philippine Airlines Interclub, and abroad like the Hong Kong and Malaysian Opens.

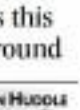
Even Philippines suddenly found itself without a sponsored in the ISAC after Jay Ibarra asked permission to go to his luck in the Southeast Asian Pass.

And the SEAG-rookie hafen team responded to the challenge, even taking the lead from eventual winner Thailand in the opening round at the Bonanza layout before settling for the match-deserved silver medal.

"It was so good so gold," Gamboletta said.

New Year's wishes this time around

IN HUDDLE



Beth Celis

MOST PEOple—especially if he or she is a celebrity—will probably be too dry to spend the nite thing that will make him/her truly happy.

So for this New Year eve, to make my respondents more comfortable, I dispensed with the word "happiness" and stuck to the trite "What do you hope to achieve in the coming year" query.

Surprisingly, some of the answers were very interesting, if not downright revealing.

* * *

Athletics president Go Teng Kok was the first to respond. For 2008, Teng Kok wants to be less controversial, a resolution he committed himself to after his mother died early this year.

So far, GTK has been successful in keeping a low profile. He has been hardly read of or heard from this year.

Since the POC elections are scheduled in 2008 after the Beijing Olympics, I asked GTK if he thinks he can maintain his resolve of staying out of controversies.

He admitted that he had been divorced involved in the past two elections, and was, in a major way responsible for the short tenure of Celdy Ramos as POC president and the installation of Cito Dayrit to her place.

He was also responsible for Dayrit backing out of the next elections where Peping Cojuangco emerged as the president. Obviously, Dayrit hailed in his cap to his backer's respectfulness, reasons why he no longer got his support in the next polls.

GTK disclosed he has a "small" chair in the POC which could determine the outcome of an election.

* * *

While a lot of people predict a three-cornered fight for the presidency among the fencing head Dayrit, ambassador's Bobet incumbent and other contenders Peter Cayetano and re-eligibility's Monsey Puentevella, GTK believes the general finals will be a battle between Dayrit and Buenaventura.

Among the four named, GTK thinks the two are the best candidates.

He admires Dayrit for his knowledge of Olympism and accomplishments in his handling of the Olympic Festival.

Looks like it's gonna be tough, but I hope GTK can stick to his resolve—for 2008 at least.

* * *

Next on the list of respondents was Red Bull senior George Chua, who is looking at an elusive 40-Filipino crown in his first-time this season. Despite a star-studded lineup, Chua's unplagued lineup, George believes that with good teamwork, they can do it.

"No matter how good the odds, as long as the team plays with a big heart, nothing is impossible," he said.

As for Gilas Pilipinas, Chua said Patrimon did not specify an All-40 Spirit crown, avoiding a conflict of interest with Red Bull.

"I hope to be able to give Talk 'N Text a PBA championship," Manotoc teased.

TNT cager MacMac Cardona refused his coach's prayers: "Sana ilang po mabigyan nawin ng championship si Mr. SBP (team owner Manny V. Pangilinan), si 40, Virgin (team governor Ricky Vargas) at si Sir (Tim Flores manager Wahlin Lim)."

Ginebra's youngest brother Hooks, on the other hand, is aiming for no-other good showing for his UE Warriors in the next UAAP season.

"We're hoping to form another competitive lineup even if several key players will leave next season," Hooks said.

* * *

Completing the list of respondents were former coach Norman Black, who hopes to have as many championships as possible for the Blue Eagles; SP Lados team coach Fritz Gaston who is looking for a good one; the fans not to abolish the tournament be held here; was, participation in This 18 under this July; and three, formation of a semi-commercial league for women.

Meanwhile, injured star Ed Cager Gary David hopes to get back in his old fighting form and most of all, for him not to get injured again. He also hopes that his team makes it to the finals this season.

While we're at it, might as well put in my wish for next year and the years to come. Perfect health, physically mentally and spiritually. Happy New Year to all!

Perfection foiled

From page A19

"It could be a great year if we win," said team-mate Mikee Romero, who also headed the Harbour Philippine Team's golden performances in the 24th Southeast Asian Games this month and the Southeast Asian Basketball Association Dunbar Championship last April.

The national squad the Complete Protection with another all-around game of 15 points, 11 rebounds and four assists.

The score

PHILIPPINES (2): Romero 20, Ong 11, Mercado 10, Hamilton 8, Alvarez 7, Pingol 6, Tiongco 6, Chio 5, Bautista 5, Fernandez 2, Cortez 2.

SAFFI (4): Mohamad 31, Ayman 13, Ojeda 9, Rahman 8, Rodriguez 6, Ocampo 6, Bakrah 4, Tan 3, Maghirang 2, Mohamad 2, Gurung 2, Ong 0, Lapuz 0.

Quarters: 19-12, 29-23, 44-41, 73-58

Nat'l divers off to China

From page A17

"We have a strong chance of sending all of them to the Olympics, barring any untoward incident like injury," Yong told the boy-ess.

The national squad is expected to leave Dec. 20 but their visas will only be released on Jan. 2, according to Yong.

The NF squad failed to send anybody to the qualifying for the 2004 Athens Olympics because of infighting in the Philippine Amateur Swimming Association. It managed to send Perez and back to the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

The five divers, with ages ranging from 17-23, are no strangers to the place, having trained there for the World Cup in 2005. They will try to get into the Olympic games in the first phase where all semifinalists of their respective events automatically qualify.

SM CHAIRMAN'S CUP WINNER Johnny Vatanyadee shows off the certificate for an Alaska Cruise for two via Royal Caribbean and Korean Air he won as a major raffle prize in the Chairman's Cup at the Manila Southwoods Golf and Country Club recently. With him are (from left) Mr. Mathias Ngangga president and CEO of Korean Travel which handles Royal Caribbean International, Korean Airlines regional manager Hong Jin, Hyun Jae Park, sales and finance Manager of Korean Airlines.

Chilling Celtics warning: The best is yet to come

BOSTON—THE BOSTON CELTICS WILL hit the new year with the NBA's best record and a belief that more is still to come.

"We haven't played our best basketball and I think most of the guys in this locker room will say that," veteran guard Ray Allen said recently after his team's home victory over the Orlando Magic.

Allen was right. The rejuvenated Celtics list the road by a four-game Western swing in the first eight leading to the New Year determined to do much more.

The Celtics have recorded wins against Sacramento and Seattle to enter their record to 24-3 with Utah and the Los Angeles Lakers still to come.

"We're going to be so much better," said Boston coach Doc Rivers. "We have a chance to be, if we keep working on it, so much better than we are right now."

Those are scary words when you consider the record which included only one loss at home, a last-second decision in the Detroit Pistons on Dec. 19.

"We want to get to the point where we are perfect," said forward Brad Pierce. "We strive for perfection if we have that type of attitude going into the game.

"You know we aren't going to be perfect, but we can be close to it and that's the type of level we want to get to. Everybody has that mentality. We're never going to be satisfied.

"It's still early in the season. We still have a long way to go and we just keep challenging ourselves each and every day."

The most daring match of the challenging is surely acquired 19-time All-Star Kevin Garnett.

The features of this once proud franchise changed in four days over the summer, when Boston acquired Allen from Seattle and Garnett from Minnesota. A total of 10 players/draft picks went to three teams (some time either came back), and the Celtics were reborn.

In the glory years in the 1960s, Boston led by 11 "Big Three" of Larry Bird, Kevin McHale and Robert Parish. Now, with the help of McHale, the Minnesota general manager who sent Garnett to Boston, there is a new "Big Three"—Garnett, Pierce and Allen.

Garnett, freed from years of obscurity in Minnesota, is the leader.

In addition to averaging 18.9 points and 10.3 rebounds per game (Pierce was at 21.1 points, Allen 19.9), he was also getting them for other people (3.6 assists) and leading the charge on the defensive end.

"I feel like if we play defense every single night we give ourselves a chance to win every single night," Garnett said. "We hold each other accountable for our defensive effort."

Rivers says having Garnett is like having another coach.

"It's not just his energy and setscade," Rivers said. "It's his focus. He has to enforce on everyone else. If someone misses a rotation, he hears me in the coach and that's nice."

One of the three Boston losses to the first 25 games came in Orlando on Dec. 16.

THE BOSTON THREE PARTY: (From left) Ray Allen, Paul Pierce and Kevin "Scales" Kevin Garnett. AP

When the teams met again five weeks later in Boston, Garnett said: "They could see it the minute you came into the locker room? things would be different. Boston won 103-91 with four players—The Three Party and young Rajon Rondo—all scoring at least 20 points.

The Celtics routed the team with the Cleveland Cavaliers, who beat them in overtime last month, with a Dec. 2 win, but first come with Cavs' LeBron James injured. They got another shot at the Pistons, still regarded as the team to beat in the Eastern Conference, on Jan. 5.

"We want to continue at this pace in the 25-game segment," said Allen. "The next 25 games we want to do somewhat of the same stuff that we're doing now, so it's not a moment or we back and reflect just yet." Reuters

Pistons, Blazers fan scorching streaks

AUBURN HILLS, MICHIGAN—RICHARD Hamilton scored 33 points and delivered nine assists to fire the Detroit Pistons to a 114-101 victory over the Indiana Pacers on Friday, their seventh win in a row.

The Pistons blew the game wide open in the second quarter when they scored 40 points to take a 64-41 lead at the intermission.

"That was as good as it gets right there [in the second quarter]," the Pistons' Chauncey Billups told reporters.

"Executing, getting stops, I mean shots were just going and we just really opened the game up."

Rasheed Wallace had 16 points, 12 rebounds and five assists, while Antonio McDyess added 13 points off the bench, including three three-pointers.

"I put so many baskets when I first got in the game and that kind of triggers a lot of other stuff for me," Hayes told reporters.

Tayshaun Prince added 15 points and Billups had 14 for the Pistons.

Jermaine O'Neal led the Pacers with 28 points.

In Miami, even a career-high 46 points by Dwyane Wade wasn't enough for the Heat to beat the Orlando Magic.

The Magic survived a late-game rally by the Heat to win 123-114 in overtime, giving coach Stan Van Gundy a victory in his return to south Florida.

Wade scored 20 points in the fourth quarter alone, but still Miami fell to 6-23.

In Portland, Oregon, Brandon Roy scored 22 points despite not playing the second quarter, and the Trail Blazers got their longest-lasting 12th-straight victory, by beating the Minnesota Timberwolves, 109-99.

12th straight

The streak matches Portland's best run since winning 12 in a row during the 2002-03 season, the team's second longest streak. Portland's longest streak was 16 games in the 1990-91 season.

Minnesota has the league's worst record at 4-24. The Timberwolves fell to 1-14 on the road.

In Los Angeles, Phil Jackson pulled even with Red Auerbach in regular-season victories as the Lakers downed the Utah Jazz, 125-109.

The Lakers' triumph gave Jackson his 938th career win and a share of seventh place on the career list.

In Oakland, California, Mike Bibby scored 29 points, including a late jumper to break a tie, and the Denver Nuggets edged the Golden State Warriors, 124-120.

Carmelo Anthony added 30 points for the Nuggets.

In Sacramento, California, Samuel Dalembert had 14 points, 11 rebounds and four blocks for Philadelphia, which pulled away in the fourth quarter to defeat the Kings, 92-86, and ended a third straight victory.

The 76ers scored seven straight points to build a seven-point lead early in the fourth quarter and never looked again.

Philadelphia has won eight of its past 11 games.

In East Rutherford, New Jersey, Richard Jefferson had 26 points as the Nets topped the Washington Wizards, 109-106.

Vince Carter added 24 points and Jason Kidd just missed a triple-double as New Jersey cruised early in fourth win in its past 14 home games.

Washington's Antawn Jamison had 27 points and 13 rebounds for his 20th double-double of the season and 209th of his career.

In Charlotte, North Carolina, David West had 20 points and 10 rebounds, and New Orleans scored to another dominating performance to sip Charlotte, 99-81.

Keeping the game with the third-best record in the Western Conference, the Hornets posted their fourth straight blowout win by quickly putting away the Bobcats with all-by-any-double, uncontested shots and energized defense.

In Memphis, Tennessee, Yao Ming had 23 points, 12 rebounds and five blocks and Houston ripped the Grizzlies apart, 103-93, despite Tracy McGrady sitting out with an injury.

The Grizzlies lost for the 11th time in the past 13 games.

In San Antonio, Jason Kapono scored 20 of his 33 points in the fourth quarter, and Toronto snapped a three-game losing streak by handing the Spurs only their second home loss of the season, 83-77.

Debut win

At Chicago, Ben Gordon scored 19 of his 21 points in the fourth quarter and the Bulls topped Milwaukee, 105-99, to give Jim Boylan a win in his debut as interim coach.

Boylan was promoted to an his assistant's role Thursday replacing Scott Skiles, who was fired on Christmas Eve after the Bulls' horrendous start.

In Phoenix, Amare Stoudemire scored 28 points on 12-of-21 shooting and the Suns downed the Los Angeles Clippers, 94-88, and won for the first time this season with less than 100 points.

The Suns had been 0-3 when scoring under 100. Reuters, AP

NEW ORLEANS' Tyson Chandler shoots home a point.

Arsenal chief eager for Beckham's visit

LONDON—ARSENAL MANAGER Arsene Wenger hopes that a lot of David Beckham's talent rubs off on his young players.

Beckham will join the Arsenal squad at its training ground, which is close to his English home, to undertake his fitness before the Los Angeles Galaxy begin its season on March 29.

"He will come in January to practice with us, occasionally with the first team or the reserves," Wenger said Friday. "He can also get good advice and we will help him to keep fit. The youngsters will look up to him, of course."

Beckham is hoping to play his 100th game for England on Feb. 6 in a friendly against Switzerland, the first match for England coach Fabio Capello.

The 32-year-old midfielder's last game for the Galaxy was a friendly against the Wellington Phoenix team in New Zealand on Dec. 1.

Wenger said he once considered signing the midfielder himself, but "for years he was at Manchester United and it was impossible." He said he has long respected Beckham for his behavior on and off the field.

"I admire how strong he's been [on the pitch] with Milan, AC or LA Galaxy, because he went through some tough times," Wenger said. "I respect the fact that he has always been football and he has always shown respect for his manager even when he was dropped." AP

Roy Jones Jr. works out with Knicks

GREENBURGH, NEW YORK—ROY JONES Jr. believes he is proof that the New York Knicks can recover from getting boxed up.

"Look at me. My last three years was not so hot, after I beat Antonio Tarver. It just went downhill for a minute," Jones said Friday. "But happens. But the best professionals come back through that."

Jones took those three training for his Jan. 19 bout against Felix Trinidad at New York City's Madison Square Garden to join the National Basketball Association's Knicks for workouts at their training center.

"Shocked a little surprised, but nobody got close enough to him," Knicks coach Isiah Thomas said. "I don't think anybody wanted to challenge him for free. But for many years I have."

Jones has plenty of basketball experience having played in the US Basketball League for the Jacksonville Barracudas.

He showed his basketball skills while going through some drills with the Knicks.

Thomas said it's always good to have someone from another sport come in to bring a different perspective. Asked what advice Jones had for the Knicks, Thomas said: "Hit the other guy before he hits you."

Jones wore a No. 4 practice jersey which he said had special meaning.

"This must go in four," he said in reference to Trinidad. AP

ROY JONES JR. (right) tells Marv Robinson and the Knicks this 'one before they hit you.'

PRESEASON FAVORITE

Magnolia struggling for form

By Herong R. Canillo

LABELED AS THE TEAM TO BEAT IN almost all pre-season polls, Magnolia has not done justice to that tag.

Coach Ricot Tungcopora, in fact, has described his team as merely "fair" at the point of the Smart TBA Philippine Cup.

"Of course, everybody would say that we should have won more games," Tungcopora told the Inquirer minutes after losing ANU Friday night. "We're not great, we're not that good, we're just (a) fair (team)."

While it's 5-7 overall with a long shot at bagging an outright semifinal seat, the Beverage Masters have surprised people who never expected them to be struggling at this point of the tournament.

In fact, with cleanup that could have easily put it two all-star squads, even the other coaches in the 10-team field, in interviews done before the start of the season, have conceded Magnolia to be the runaway champion to coast top notches.

Asked what has been the envy of the other mentors but actually been the bane of Tungcopora, at least up to this point...

"The challenge has been how to get everyone in rhythm," the young coach, who won two titles with Beverage Master before being ordered to move to Magnolia, added. "And people will have to realize that it will take time to do that."

Benjie Paras and Lordy Tugade have been the only consistent offensive forces for the Beverage Masters, who have the abundance of talent on all fronts, especially in the frontline where an established source like Dennis Espinosa has not gotten his due recognition.

"It's tough to have a lineup without only one big talent as (what I have)," Tungcopora continued. "But this good thing about it is that you know that you have all the ammunition you need when you go to battle."

Magnolia is getting such reliable players like Rabeboen, Wesley Gonzales, Dorian Peña, Jamaican Jimmy Bates, Cris Villanueva, Oliver Bocala, Chris Calimag, now as rookie off the bench of naturally out-plus limited minutes.

But Tungcopora has been very patient in naming Larry Rosario as the one who has not really gotten the playing time from him.

"He used to be a star in all the teams for him played for (when)," the coach said of Pensacola, who was acquired from Red Bull during the off-season. "I'm having a difficult time trying to divide the time among my 12 players."

A very balanced team like the Purefoods Tender Juicy Giants has led the tournament right from the start, is also used a 7-0 start for an 11-4 mid and within another win of the semifinal privileges.

Sta. Lucia is another side that is making a run, winning six straight before the 'B' Globe break to come to within a game of the Giants even as Red Bull, said to be a game at the start after losing some key players like Rosario, is solidly in third place.

And when asked what kind of team, as you looked one or one that a Jollibee, he preferred to Smith, Tungcopora did a great job at not giving an answer.

"I could but (with this lineup)," he said. "But I will try my best. But the good thing about this (lineup) is that I know that we have faced, watched (the) number of talent that else team has."

As when the tournament resumes on Jan. 4, Tungcopora would have had all the time to think of how to divide the time among his players. He may even have to totally ignore some people in his lineup to make it work.

DAMMIT Seigle is one of the more consistent Magnolia stars.

Pucay rules year-end PGAP event

ASIAN TOUR VETERAN JOHN PUCAY capped a great year by shooting a four-under par 68 to win the PGAP Year-End Challenge by a stroke over Antonio Ingjanian at the short but tight Loma Agninaldo layout on Friday.

The senior campaigner Pagsanjan native bagged Indy Dolor, Semerol and Arnold Villaruzales, who tied for third after Dolor signed for his card the same day that the new set of PGAP officers was inducted.

The tournament was presented by president Ino Buenaventura.

Among with Buenaventura, the other members of the PGAP's new board who were inducted by lawyer Abel Arlando were vice-presidents Demetrio Bachat, Rhino Bautista (secretary), Emanuel Arevanawa, Vic Gonzaga (treasurer), Fernando Jim, Mario Escudero (committee chairs), Rodolfo Cuello (others committee chair), Gerry Bautista (auditor), Rey Bonga (sergeant-at-arms), Jim Tee (press liaison officer).

Pucay, who won the P5 kg of the inaugural Asian Tour at the Mahayon, won P30,000.

Ingjanian settled for P20,000. Semerol and Villaruzales split P15,000 between them.

The PGAP held several tournaments for its events hungry pros in the year about to pass.

Buenaventura said that he expects even more tournaments to be held next year under the auspices of the new board.

FILIPINO IN AWARDS RITES AT HOLLYWOOD PARK

The winning connections of the long shot celebrate their victory with Manila racing Club (PSC) director Marvin B. Caguioa (third from right, top photo) after was invited to receive the silver plate trophy for a second Inquirer Sportswriters' Choice Awards. Caguioa grabbed his season-ne victory in the recently concluded Andrew Garibaldi Santa Stakes at Hollywood Park, CA, USA. The mixed color was extended by winning horse owner Jose photo (Jim Ford, Inc., Bobby, 69 Stable, Haycock & Jones and trainer Patrick Gallagher. Above photo shows the winning time of three-year-old bay filly Dancers Prince out of Tres Luna finishing (1 flinches in 1:48.16.

Mathias, Patronabon triumph in Milo tennis

AZIS MATHIAS AND JESON PATRONABON dispatched their respective foes to arrange a semifinal contest in the boys' 16-under division yesterday in the DND Mini Junior Tennis Cup at the Philam Riviera Tennis Courts in Cainta, Rizal.

The 13-year-old, an Angeles-based Multi-talented Filipino-Spanish-Pakistani dynamo, bested Jan Lorenz Arnaiz, 6-0, 6-1 in their one-hour match, advancement Ramos-Tuppy at the upper bracket.

In the girls' 14-under fight, Samantha Camille Chanel Arnaiz (Legaspi, 6-1, 6-0).

The all-net battle Mary Grenjoie, who bested Michel Rocha, 6-0, 6-4, 10-4.

Jacob Lagman Hamlet Zamel Ibrahim, 6-0, 6-0; Christine Jacinth Gaile Balagtas, 6-3, 6-2; Hans Jakes engaged Ibrahim Jacob, 6-1, 6-0; and Mark Christopher Lagrosa, 6-4, 4-6, 10-7, to outwit the boys' 10-under quarterfinal round.

Rosebud secures Hobart handicap

HOBART, AUSTRALIA—U.S. YACHT Rosebud has taken handicap honors in the Sydney to Hobart yacht race.

Race organizers Rolex Sydney Hobart confirmed that Rosebud's time of two days, six hours, two minutes and two seconds was just enough to beat Zephyr and Morna, which were still at sea late Saturday.

Rosebud, owned and skippered by American Roger Sturgeon, finished more than eight hours behind line honors winner's WildOats XI, which became the first yacht in nearly 60 years to win their class.

The handicap competition makes allowances for who each other class in relation to the yachts to determine a winner.

Wild Oats, skippered by Mark Richards, finished the 628-nautical mile (1,163-kilometer, 725-mile) race Friday in one day, 13 hours, 24 minutes, crossing the line in Constitution Dock in Hobart at 10:24 a.m. (2324 GMT).

Both today's 30 starters made into the previous favorite and dominated from the opening minutes of Australia's premier yacht race which began from Sydney Harbor on Wednesday.

Wild Oats crossed the finish line ahead of the fiercely rival CIV Ickle Leopard, skippered by Mike Slade, which staged a dramatic comeback Friday morning before finishing 27 minutes behind.

Australian entry Ichi Ban finished third and Rosebud was fourth across the line.

Wild Oats earn had the line of line, which won from 1998-1998—the last and only other yacht to win three in a row.

AP

BENEDICT Chan, representative of Kenter School to the Tiong Lian Basketball League...and Marycris Ch Cruz, president and CEO of Pilcro Manufacturing, distributor of Converse, sign an agreement making Converse one of the sponsors of the Tiong Lian basketball tournament slated in January

Torre, Antonio ready for rematch

TORRE: We're not getting any younger

Baguio, Mindoro eyed as host of GMs' battle

GRANDMASTERS EUGENIO Torre and Rogelio "Joey" Antonio Jr. are ready for a rematch.

The country's top woodpushers will key in control each other in a 12-match marathon in the summer of 2008 for viewing areas Pictures chess in the countryside and prepare themselves for the Chess Olympiad slated late next year.

Antonio became the first local player to beat Torre with a one-game victory in their 1996 match.

"Hindi na rin namin kami batuhan. (We're not getting any younger," said Torre. "We need to develop more young chess talents. We're hoping to get the interest of potential talents from the grassroots level by going to their places."

Organizers are planning to hold the matches in Puerto Galera and Baguio City to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the World Chess Championship match between Anatoly Karpov and Viktor Korchnoi, all to be held in Baguio City, in 1978.

Torre is an adopted son of Baguio while Antonio hails from Oriental Mindoro.

Torre and Antonio are expected to lead the country's campaign in the Chess Olympiad set in Dresden, Germany on November 12 to 25. It will be the fifth time that Germany is hosting a chess Olympiad.

"Mindi natin silaw baka yon na ang aming 14th--don't know if it will be said last Olympiad nen yun," said Antonio. "Ano'ng mangyare, magsuda na 'yong preparado kami (Whatever happens, it's better that we are prepared)."

Quezon City majority floor leader and fourth district Councilor Ariel Inton is also open to his city's hosting of the Torre and Antonio rematch.

"Both players are based in Quezon City" said Inton. "I mean if he (Torre) and the last (Antonio) are from our area, we should be great for our city and our people if they will play here. If it's not possible for us to host all 12 matches, even just the first three and the last three," Merlyn Barrera added. Carmelo Barrera

ANTONIO: Preparing for Olympiad

5th Avenue cagers open Zheng Cup bid with victory over Macau

By Roy Luarca

NANAN CITY, CHINA—ROGER DAguio capped his heroics with the deciding basket Friday night as 5th Avenue Telecoms nipped Macau, 93-91, at the start of the 7th Zheng Chenggong Cup here.

The 5-foot 11 Gajala exploded for 35 points, including the game's last four points in 30 seconds to save the Filipinos.

Sinking first three-point attempt, Macau led by as many as 15 points, 89-83, midway in the third quarter.

But Zagala, a former universal player, combined with Lan Pahgaine to push the Filipinos within 64-67 at the end of the period.

Macau was still on top at 91-89 with 10 seconds left, but Zagala lowered the count before getting the ball on a Macau fumble and splitting the middle for the marginal winner just before the buzzer.

Other opening day results at the Nanan Stadium are Bizzie Guys of Indonesia over Singapore's Tong Whye Physical Association, 80-66, and Hong Kong rebelling the Nanan All-Stars, 68-62.

Playing coach Jamil Mendoza carried the nine-man team's shaky start to the holiday break and the last series they reversed to take over the place of Mad and Mew in the six-team, single-round-robin tournament being held in honor of the late Chinese general and hero.

"We're still rusty and off-form," said Mendoza. Former pros Jeffrey Gaudez and Willie Moody were unable to join the team here.

Elsewhere

LAST MONTH 30—Gajala 35, Pahgaine 31, Dalvit Lim 8, Bautista 8, Sutcher 4, Dizon 0, Mendoza 0. (swipe)

MACAU 91—Li 27, Si Long 21, Si Jia 20, Fai Yi Li 12, Li Jun Zi 11, Leong 0, Ka Ji Jia 0.

Quarters: 15-20, 47-32, 64-67, 91-89

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3) The best entry each for (1) entry to the email that you want from the entry Inquirer and some and this entry, all other entries will be disqualified.

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b) Permanent address
c) Landline number
d) Mobile number
e) Email address

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INQUIRER

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
Sunday SPORTS
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2007

History beckons New England

Patriots shoot for NFL's first 16-0 record

FOXBOROUGH—THE QUESTION WAS FROM AN OUT-of-town reporter and it was anathema to Patriots coach Bill Belichick, but it has proven prophetic.

"A lot of people, not just here locally but across the country, are talking about this team having a perfect record this season at 16-0. Is that something that you welcome or scare for?" asked the seasoned, and inquisitive Sept. 19, three days after the Patriots had defeated the San Diego Chargers, 38-34, to run their record to 2-0.

"That's so ridiculous," said Belichick. "Seriously is there anything else? We need to go out and have a good practice today. That's what we need to do. We need to get ready for Buffalo."

But it's not so ridiculous anymore. The moment has arrived. Belichick and the Patriots can complete the first 16-0 regular season in NFL history—the league switched to a 16-game schedule in 1978—with a victory over the host Kevin Mawae-led Jets today. Only nine times in league history to post an undefeated, untied regular season and the first since the 1972 Miami Dolphins, who had a 14-0 regular season en route to a 17-0 overall.

The prospect of going 14-0 has been the elephant in the locker room for three, or wouldn't we know it—months now.

"At first I used to say 'We focus on one thing, all these questions in here, it is in the back of our minds rolled but one achieve," said linebacker Tedy Bruschi, when asked if the Patriots would have an extra adrenaline rush Saturday.

"To be undefeated in the 16-regular season would be something that few ever in here does those before. When you're faced with that, it's a challenge and you want to face that challenge and believe it. I think that will all be in the back of our minds, and of course all the attention to the game, being on three different networks. But here (to win the game)? We have to focus on the Giants and what we have to do to stop them."

AFTER: during the team of investigation season the NFL's first 16-0 record, New England quarterback Tom Brady finally gives a hint of his current goal, interviewed by journalist about the possibility of a perfect regular season run, Brady said "Before we, it we go to 1-16 this year, we won't going to be happy about that."

AFTER watching their team clinch the No. 1 Packers lose team reserves victory

It was last November to stop New England as it has produced an average margin of victory of 28.8 points, scoring a league-best 36.7 points per game while allowing only 15.9 per game, tied for tops in the league. But talk of 16-0 was verboten until this week.

That wasn't a surprise to Giants quarterback Eli Manning. In 2006, Manning's other brother, Peyton, quarterback of the Indianapolis Colts to a 13-0 start. Eli and 13-0 wasn't a topic of conversation with his brother.

"No, I never really spoke to him at that time about it," said the Giants quarterback. "It's sort of there and maybe like a guy don't throwing too bitter, you don't talk about it in the game. You try to go on, scored and went everything the same. Even afterwards, he didn't make a big deal about it. He had other things and the next important thing was the playoffs, so I never really spoke to him about that."

If New England had taken the same precaution, but now history is within its reach. The Patriots, who have doubled home-field advantage in the playoffs and a first-round bye, have made it clear they intend to play for 16-0.

The Patriots could set other records in the process. Randy Moss needs two touchdown catches to break Jerry Rice's record of 22, set in the strike-shortened 1987 season. Tom Brady needs two touchdown passes to surpass Dorian Manning's mark of 49, set in 2004. The Patriots, who have scored 561 points, need just 6 to break the NFL record set by the 1998 Minnesota Vikings.

But Brady has made it clear the only record he cares about is 16-0.

"If you take any energy away from that as a goal, then you're really not doing yourself or your team any justice," he said. "Maybe when you look back at the end of your career you look at those things and it's a cool thing to have, but everything I've experienced in the NFL and the greatest moments I've had is not when you throw five touchdown passes. It's when you win championships."

Asked individually if he's used as a rallying point, Belichick said, "No. I'm not a rallying point. I'm just trying to get our football team ready to play. That's what we need to do. We need to get ready for Buffalo."

Moss, who has been a non-factor Sunday, insisted that's not the case. "I'm not a factor at all," he said. "I'm not a factor at all every-body says," Giants defensive end Osi Umenyiora told the New York Daily News in Tuesday's edition. "Nobody in the NFL wants to see them get undefeated. If they do go undefeated, they are going to be known in that team that was just that much better than everybody else. I don't want to see that."

More motivation for the Jints can, not that they need it.

Although the Patriots may have changed their approach to dealing with questions about perfection, they're not changing their approach to playing it.

"We're all right in the middle of the right now and it's our next game, as that week, right now I look at it is possible achieving a victory over the Giants," said Brandy. —With News Services

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HOPMAN CUP

Meghann, Mardy lift US squad over India

PERTH, AUSTRALIA—MEGHANN SHAUGHNESSY, filling in for Serena Williams, got the United States off to a winning start and Mardy Fish clinched the win over India in the first round of the 2008 Hopman Cup.

The No. 2-ranked US team led 2-0 after all of the doubles in the international mixed team event.

Shaughnessy rushed a recovering opening women's singles match against Sania Mirza by winning the last five games against the ailing Indian player for a 6-3, 6-0, 6-3 triumph.

Fish overcame an unbeatable 2-0 lead with 6-3, 6-4 win over India's Rohan Bopanna in the men's singles.

Australia won to play the Czech Republic later Saturday with the top-seeded Swiss meeting in Group A campaigning against Taiwan and France playing Argentina on Sunday.

Australian Open champion Serena Williams was expected to arrive in Perth on the weekend and replace Shaughnessy for the United States' next match against Czech Republic on Monday.

Injuries have sidelined Williams' mixed have but she is expected to be okay for the Monday match.

Each team plays three times in the round-robin format, with the top two teams in each group advancing to the semifinals. AP

Wife's ailment haunts 'The Ghost'

GILROY, CALIFORNIA—ROBERT Guerrero's world is rules during his down training runs in the Diablo Range's rambling foothills. The IBF Featherweight champion relishes the daily grind of routines he said. On his faint gaffe, because that diverse hangs include numerous uses on.

"You get used to it after a while, but when you go out of town and come back, you smell it again," Guerrero says. "Like it smell is new."

When the Salinas boxer sees children at the Gilroy Boys and Girls Clubs he trains in his home video documentary among the cabin wooden benches that flanks the grouse. The Christmas New Year's vacation season has forced both more frightening and more joyous than anything he's ever known.

Casey Guerrero, his wife and the mother of their two children, was diagnosed with leukemia less than two weeks before his first spotted Mickie Hancock last month.

Sleeping on hospital floor

He spent most nights sleeping on the floor of a hospital room before the fight, and he didn't get to his son, Ayiana, until the day before the bout. In the nervous moments before boarding cars accidentally ding at a dozen cars, his father cobrabilled for the occasion.

"This is what puts your head on the table," Robert Guerrero recalls he says. "This is what's going to pay your medical bills for your wife."

After the Arizona bout joined his name, the Ghost knocked out Ricardo Mercado and stole the IBF world featherweight title from Juan Diaz in Grey

GUERRERO: A lot of people are counting on me to do my best.

He's spent the eight weeks since his victory in a whirlwind of motion and emotion. Besides his job supporting Casey to dote on visits in the Iron Precision cave, he's practicing the finesse points of a kimping dropper or punting a 2-year-old girl's fish into a pool table—and his nerves to himself per cup of coffee.

"I'm a little bit out of responsibility on me," Guerrero says. "A lot of people are counting on me to do my best at everything I need to do, so I don't want to let anybody down. Mr. Eddie, my wife, my children, my mom...everybody is counting on me."

With simple requirements in family and in down, the 24-year-old champion is juggling his duties as a boxer, a husband, a father, and a brother to another aspiring fighter with dreams of glory.

A shock

So Rey Guerrero hasn't dropped anything.

"He's a toughbird, but nobody would have to resort to that," says Robert Guerrero, who's also his son's trainer. "It's a big shock when they tell you your wife has cancer, and then she's a diabetic. It's hard to do. It was tough for everybody to deal with."

His father suspects the shock of the Feb fighting was was particularly well equipped to handle such a challenge, aside from his talented discipline. Jet somnolescin that come home after a long day of training, he's been diagnosed with a debilitating kidney ailment that's known as Addison's disease. Addison's disease is a rare endocrine disorder that affects the adrenal glands, which produce hormones that regulate many of the body's important functions, including the body's response to stress and its use of salt and water. The disease is also known as chronic adrenal insufficiency or hypoadrenalism.

He doesn't wear protective gloves during training sessions only for running and fights. Enough for favorite workouts at Hardcore Hardcore, the underdog Mexican heathen weight who become champion would champion Israel Vazquez in a 2002 car crash.

"The people around me keep me in control of being in front of the other I said," Guerrero says. "Casey plays a big role in that, and you have my Ex-Ole."

Robert Guerrero was an amateur champion in both Texas and San Francisco before raising his family in Gilroy. When young Robert showed an interest in the burning business, Robert developed a method to maximize his son's potential—everything from a strict early morning training regimen to an stringent diet.

Through Robert has worked with several trainers for the Arnold and Joe Gonzalez, his father a million dreams.

"The same time knocking on the door at 4 a.m., saying, 'Come on, we'll drink coffee and watch the movies,'" Robert says. "He pushed me. He still does."

After a steady rise through the ranks were made and a near-miss with the 2004 Olympic team, Guerrero won the IBF title in September 2006 when Eric Aiken quit in the tenth round. Guerrero had the belt in Orlando Salido four months later—but Salido tested positive for doping, voiding the result.

When Casey gave birth to their son, Robert, in the middle-ages, Guerrero was in Denmark exchanging the vacant title by beating Spend Blank, even winning—here's from Abrel's home sweet with a multi-round knockout.

All shook up

Casey and Robert have been together since their early days at Gilroy High School. She backed his progression through a dangerous sport, and her all seen should have in my his support team—could I have guessed from his vocabulary as he.

"I was talking to her on the phone, and she was asking exactly what time I was fighting," Guerrero says. "I told her, and she said, 'OK, I'll be praying at exactly 7 o'clock. Don't think about you. Just think about what you have to do.' That's what she do."

Until Casey makes a full recovery, the Ghost will keep doing the right thing for his family and his profession. AP

IN THIS ISSUE
- 'RP a slice of paradise affordable to baby boomers' /B2
- Flower and dolls from what used to be waste /B3

Sunday BIZ
Business Features Editor Margie Quimpo-Bajina

'He who is closest to the customer is king'

Bohol-based entrepreneur innovates

RAYMOND NOLDAN

By Margie Quimpo-Bajina

*(Symbolic will be featuring Master En*trepreneurs, entrepreneurs who turned their companies around or who implemented innovative ideas while taking the Master Entrepreneurship program at the Asian Institute of Management Asian Center for Entrepreneurship.

Forty-one entrepreneurs graduated under ME Batch 32. Four of the students/businessmen received "Superior performance" distinctions and two got "Commendable performance" awards.

We start the series with Raymond Noldan, 43, an Economics graduate of the University of the Philippines.)

RAYMOND, A BOHOL-based entrepreneur, was once approached by a top executive of a mobile phone company to become its exclusive distributor. He had to say no.

Why should he say yes when Raymond's Save 'n Earn is the largest "One Stop Telecom Chain" in Bohol that carries all three brands—Globe Telecom, Smart Communications Co. Inc., and Sun Cellular.

Its product lines include cellular phones, accessories, prepaid cards, electronic load, dream satellite TV, satellite phones and cell phone repair and services.

Raymond named a "supreme professional" when he graduated from the Asian Institute of Management Master in Entrepreneurship program for innovations he adopted in his business.

"I had been thinking of innovations in 2006 and I needed affirmation of them," Raymond cites as the reason for joining the ME program.

A major innovation was a program that reduced his inventory of prepaid loads through real-time recording of transactions through a new technology that Save 'n Earn developed. The program enables Save 'n Earn dealers to always have the load value customers want to buy. The outlets no longer carry the phone cards. Only the new, invisible data.

Another program he undertook was the hiring of students as part-time workers.

"If Jollibee can get part-time students who are hired yet mop the floors and clean the toilets, why can't I?" he asked.

His rationale was that malls, where many of his outlets are located, have a peak time of only four hours, so he answer to meet this increased demand is to get part-time workers.

A third innovation is the S 'n' E Entrepreneurship program wherein he convinces resellers into dealers. He also has a unique program where he provides financing for his commercial employees to become his dealers, thus converting them into micro-entrepreneurs.

Today, he has 24 company-owned outlets and 31 franchisees.

Like many entrepreneurs, Raymond did not strike gold during his first attempt at entrepreneurship. After college, he went into the poultry contract-growing business. The company he was supplying to experienced financial difficulties and Raymond lost a lot of money.

Typhoon "Yoping," which destroyed his farm, did not help.

"I then went into processed meat and table eggs peddling to help my family after our farm was hit by Typhoon Yoping," he says.

He insisted there that he would never go

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'RP a slice of paradise affordable to baby boomers'

TONY MACALUSO

By Ramon J. Pajarillo
Contributor

AN AMERICAN CLOBBERTIZER, Tony Macaluso of Florida, bought an 18-foot long carving of a school of fishes in Philippine hardwood, saws.

It is the sized signature he has ever bought during any of his travels. "But it fits well in the sectional floor of my home in Florida," he said. He will show it to friends, not as a carving but, as a flat TV screen showing smiling Filipinos.

"In very glowing terms, I will tell friends about the Filipino accommodations and their willingness to try not only to be friendly but very happy people," he said. "Friendliness is evidenced in their culture."

Macaluso was here as one of the prominent buyers at the Asian International Real Estate Expo and Conference (AIREC). He talked about marketing to (US) baby boomers (those born after World War II up to 1964).

"You have the cast for boomers who want to escape the winter, English-speaking people, low cost of living, and the life stage facilities that baby boomers can afford," he said. "I will tell people how far baby boomers can stretch their retirement budget or investment dollars in the Philippines."

Isaac Berlin, the FILAm CEO of ARREC, described Macaluso as "probably the (US realtors who brought) planeloads of US baby boomers to Costa Rica and Panama.

"The boomers are a lucrative market segment that will continue to spend for the next 20 years until they are in their 70s and 80s," she said.

By Macaluso's estimate, the US boomers are now about 80 million strong. Every nine seconds, 10,000 are coming 60. Accompanying number of US boomers ensure a growing market that includes those managing wealth inherited from parents and spouses.

As the boomers march to their golden years, they acquire second homes or invest in properties that appreciate in value. Some boomers, however, are more narrow: they look forward to living in their city to places that have promising care payoff.

The boomers market is why real estate has gone international and why US property professionals like Macaluso are interested in the Philippines to fill their clientele demand for global properties.

In February 2007, a survey by the US National Association of Realtors showed that 27 percent of US realtors had engaged in international transactions compared with only 20 percent four years ago.

Macaluso gathered early information that could help convince the Philippines with the needs, wants and desires of boomers.

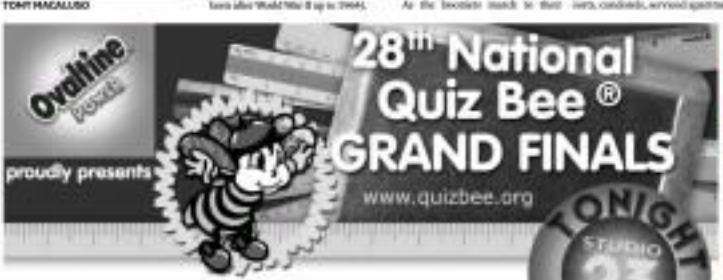
These seniors and the boomer health freaks have been travelling to places with leisure villas, exercise resorts, condotels, serviced apartments, and condominiums.

"They are very concerned about health services and facilities because as you grow older your home starts to become your world."

Another market segment is boomers with generational responsibilities. They care for their aging folks, and require geriatric care and assisted living facilities such as those in downsizing the Philippines.

Many countries put together consumer investor/boomer spending stimulus jobs, mission entrepreneurs, and brings in more investment projects.

Panama, to name labors and Costa Rica, brought in foreigners with retirement options (home loans, restaurant meals, movies, hospital bills, and doctor's fees. Immigrants who buy homes are exempted from paying real taxes for 20 years. Its pensionado program applies to foreigners with pensions from social security systems, armed forces or private companies.



JENETH and Raymund Roldan

'He who is ...

Previous B1

...ness business where he is dependent on only one person or company.

He went instead into the appliance business, being the innovative thinker that he is, he used agency to sell the appliances and those agents got commissions and discounts when they buy appliances. To attract people to buy from him, he provided with payments of up to one year.

It was in the early '90s when he was approached by a cell phone dealer to sell phones on a consignment basis.

Raymund agreed to try selling 10 phones. But the salesman arrived with two boxes of the then huge cell phones.

Raymund had to connect a TV set from his small appliance shop to accommodate the mobile phones.

He recalls that a few months later, Mobiline (the first though now defunct mobile phone firm owned by PLDT) began to offer schemes for mobile phone subscribers.

Smart Communications Co. Inc. followed suit soon, cell phone sales began to pick up.

Of the first 15 lines (more sold), Raymund sold 13.

He earned commissions from the new appliance business he was into. If you consume it with school, I was only in Grade 7. My commissions were small in college. The new business (cell phone) was an equally... the old issues did not undermined it."

The turning point in sales for the cell phone business was the prepaid scheme.

"The prepaid (the first scheme introduced by the phone companies) is key. It is the majority of the market," Raymund comments.

The prepaid scheme demands a clean credit background and proof of income—something which the majority of the Filipinos cannot meet.

Raymund says sales increased by about a thousand times when prepaid was introduced. At that time, in 1994, the distributorships of mobile phone companies were deregistered.

Raymund decided to do two things...first on the customer and upon franchise orders area cell sites were coming built.

"In the early years of the cell phone industry, there were a lot of informal intermediaries. National distributors appointed 'sub-distributors' for the different areas or provinces instead of penetrating the area themselves. The increasing cell phone density in the provinces were usually informally appointed as 'area sub-distributors' for their respective provinces. These 'sub-distributors' operated as a one-man operation in small offices, taking orders from dealers and retailers.

This is the area where Raymund saw a big market built from the national distributors. At that time, we did not have the financial capacity to buy in bulk as a sub-distributor. I also believed, at that time, that gradual branching is the newly-fired up areas (areas with area cell sites) would be a more viable and economical alternative since I will be dealing directly with the customers or end users...than 'he who is closest to the customer is king.'

That proved to be a wise move since our network of branches gradually expanded geographically all over the provinces. Since we dealt directly with the end-users, we were not affected by the rampant price wars among the distributors and dealers. We bypassed certain channels in the supply chain to directly serve the end-users through our network of branches and franchised outlets to maximize our profitability and leverage."

Soon, he had a branch in every major town and not long after, he went into franchising.

Sure to Lasts franchising program has three packages—P60,000 for a cart, which includes P30,000 worth of stocks; P250,000 for a kiosk with stocks of P125,000; and P500,000 for a store with stocks worth P250,000.

As this goes to press, Raymund is spending Christmas in the US enjoying a very profitable year.

28TH NATIONAL QUIZ BEE CONTESTANTS

MAKABAYAN

Region I (Ilocos Region)
Pangasinan Eastern Elementary School
Coach: Ms. Analiza A. Campos
Contestants: Mark John Bandola

Region II (Cagayan Valley)
Ethiopia Base Central School
Coach: Ms. Teresita D. Hinampang
Contestant: Michmarie Edmundo

Region III (Central Luzon)
Natividad Elem. School
Coach: Mrs. Elena C. Diaz
Contestant: Thea Patricia M. Hapitajan

Region IV-A (CALABARZON)
Juan Sumulong Elem. School
Coach: Ms. Lucrecia R. Bautista
Contestant: Angel Lorraine Delda

Region IV-B (MIMAROPA)
John F. Kennedy Memorial School
Coach: Ms. Josefina Tinlac
Contestant: Lucrecia T. Palabasan

Region V (Bicol)
Daraga Central School
Coach: Ms. Teresita A. Baria
Contestant: Justin Rae Aguilar

Region VI (Western Visayas)
Dingdian Central Pre-Academy & Arts
Coach: Ms. Sylvia Dublan
Contestant: Eros Ramon E. Magsayoon

Region VII (Central Visayas)
Inoc Saint School
Coach: Ms. Cecilia D. Ingles
Contestant: Mary Ann B. Bello

Region VIII (Eastern Visayas)
Dominga Elem. School
Coach: Mrs. Ma. Fe Abellanosa
Contestant: Greg Stephenson Quinanola

Region IX (Zamboanga Peninsula)
Pagadian City Pilot School
Coach: Ms. Virginia Bulatao
Contestant: Jordan U. Keller

Region X (Northern Mindanao)
Xavier University Grade School
Coach: Mr. Rolando Gonzales
Contestant: Ma. Clara Lapuz

Region XI (Davao)
Magsaysay Pilot Grade Elem. School
And Special Education Center
Coach: Mrs. Rosario R. Rosete
Contestant: Margie

Region XII (SOCCSKSARGEN)
Koronadal City Elem. School-1
Coach: Ms. Rosechris G. Rafael
Contestant: Mary Louise Nelson

CARAGA Administrative Region
Butuan West Central Elem. School
Coach: Mrs. Anita A. Villaflorar
Contestant: Marilyn G. Cuadrones

Cordillera Administrative Region
Tabaan Central School
Coach: Ms. Rose D. Dawis
Contestant: Rizalie B. Gawaan

National Capital Region
Pasig Catholic School
Coach: Ms. Lorna Landecho
Contestant: Lester Antonio B. Natcher

MATHEMATICS

Region I (Ilocos)
Ingan Central School
Coach: Ms. Lourdes del Castillo
Contestant: Jean Charlie Mateo

Region II (Cagayan Valley)
Tuguegarao West Central School
Coach: Ms. Ismel Canap
Contestant: Ma. Angelica Zamora

Region III (Central Luzon)
Iram (SPED) Center for the Gifted
Coach: Ms. Rosalinda O. Lim
Contestant: Patricia Viola Regala

Region IV-A (CALABARZON)
College San Agustin – Iruhin
Coach: Marife Dolleo
Contestant: Carlo Centeno

Region IV-B (MIMAROPA)
Palawan State University
Coach: Ms. Ma. Herlinda O. Arnaiz
Contestant: Wilgan Omar Labaset

Region V (Bicol)
University of St. Anthony
Coach: Mr. Alex Gallardo
Contestant: Jonna A. Rosario

Region VI (Western Visayas)
Iloilo Central Commercial High School
Coach: Ms. Ophel Joy Nombrado
Contestant: Jan Ysrael Tan

Region VII (Central Visayas)
Sibonga Community Pilot School
Coach: Mrs. Rosita Lobaton
Contestant: Ma. O. Morales

Region VIII (Eastern Visayas)
Regional Science High School
Coach: Mrs. Lorinda G. Cabrillo
Contestant: Ma. Benjamin U. Ato

PRIZES

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CAMAGA makes beautiful things out of corn husks.

'I wanted them to find out for themselves what they can create out of something from otherwise useless materials'

ARTIFICIAL flowers out of natural materials

Flowers and dolls from what used to be waste

By Yolanda Santin-Fuertes
Inquirer Northern Luzon

URDANETA CITY—"WE used to feed corn husks to farm animals, but we namely burned them. But we have found out that we can create something artistic and beautiful from what we considered as wastes," says Jay-ar Caringa, 19, an out-of-school youth from Villasis town.

Caringa was one of the 67 trainees in making and using corn husks, a project of the Department of Agriculture's Urdaneta regional office under its Community Management for Corn program.

Their trainers came as a pleasant revelation for the trainees composed of mainly of out-of-school youth and students from the different villages of Villasis.

The way became, at the start of the four-day training, they were not shown any example or photo of a finished product, their trainer, Priscilla Mercoja, says.

"I wanted them to find out for themselves what they can create out of something from otherwise useless materials."

The trainees were simply here to mix the different colors to come up with seasonal hues using fabric dye. The next lesson was how to cut petals and leaves from the dyed husks and then fashion them into flowers like rose, lotus, calla lily and others.

Corn husks are also for the made into dolls, but that would be for the next training of selected trainees, Mercoja says.

To make an works from corn husks, you would need basic art tools like white glue, masking tape, floral tape, scissors, wires, glue sticks and glue gun, twines and different colors of fabric dye.

For big flowers and dolls, husks of yellow corn are used because they are bigger than those of other varieties. Yellow corn is used as feeds and is widely grown in Pangasinan. The province produces 65 percent of the corn production in the Ilocos region, Secretariat Mercoja, DA Ilocos regional agro-coordinating says. A total of 35,000 hectares are planted to corn yearly.

After the cobs are removed, the other corn plant parts such as the stalk, husks, silk (hair-like part) and roots are usually thrown away.

CREATE something beautiful from waste.

PEN holder

But with creative imagination, all these wastes become works of art, with the husks turned into petals and leaves, the stalks into stems or branches, the silk as fibers of pots or vases (instead of moss), and more so, useful, items.

"The trainees are usually surprised when they see their artistic creations. They can hardly believe that they can do beautiful things out of something that almost has to no value," Mercoja says.

She challenged them to discover more their artistic abilities by embracing real flowers, and to create other usable crafts like bags and caps.

Unlike projects that end after the training had ended, the DA regional office plans to hold a provincewide contest on corn husk art making next year to encourage the trainees to come up with better designs and craftsmanship, Mateo says.

Representative Rosendo to says that he has contacted his friends in Metro Manila to market the products locally and abroad. He might however some expansion farm in Carmen to Rosales town (a also traded way. The sale of the produce from the farm will help finance the livelihood project of the trainees, he says. A store in front of the farm will be put up to display the products.

One of the trainees, May Bello, president of the federation of rural improvement clubs of Villasis, said the RIC will go into full production of corn husk art works for export in 6 years.

She says an RIC member, who now lives in Guam, will market the products in that state "where people are fond of hand-made products."

COLORFUL flowers designed by Caringa

Interesting facts and figures on Christmas shopping

- THE BIGGEST SHOPPING DAY of the year is Dec. 23.
- Some 44,000 kilos of pork and beef are sold on that day when on an average day only 8,000 kilos of pork and beef are sold, about 43,000 pieces of whole chicken are sold, on average is 8,000 pieces. Some 30,000 pieces of ham are sold; only 2,000 pieces of ham are sold daily.
- Grapes become the star today Dec. 20. About 9,000 kilos of grapes are sold on this day. On average, less than 1.00 kilos of grapes are sold per day.
- On retail, Christmas begins in July. You will normally hear Christmas songs playing in the marketing department or holiday marketing plans and programs are completed in July.
- The store personnel celebrate their Christmas party in January or February as they are too busy during the season to do any partying.
- The stores do not close even on Christmas and New Year's day. They do, however, have shortened hours.
- As soon as December hits, the stores are on a 24/7 shift, and delivers. no double. Some 80 ten-wheeler trucks are dispatched to do daily deliveries to all the stores. (From the Bacani's Improvements Inc.)

Tips on having a truly meaningful celebration

'TIS THE SEASON ONCE again for good food, a lot of cheer, hope, and let's face it—excesses.

This year you may want to do your share in reducing your impact by having a truly meaningful holiday celebration.

Below are some helpful tips to get you started.

Vegetables: Buy local, seasonal, winter vegetables and support your local organic farmer and farmers' market whenever possible.

Avoid: Out of season fruit and vegetables and over packaged food.

Meat: Avoid imported meats that have traveled thousands of miles by air before reaching the shops.

Wine: Check your bottle of wine to see if the cork is real. To make real corks for a single year is cut down—just a small part of the bark is removed, leaving the tree alive. In fact planting an real cork helps maintain one of the most environmentally friendly industries possible.

Avoid: Packing bottles in the waste bin, instead try to recycle all bottles.

Plastic: Remember to gather up and recycle everything from bottles and cans to wrapping paper and Christmas crackers.

Avoid: Disposable items on the Christmas table and buy produce with the least packaging.

Christmas Cards: Only buy cards that are printed on recycled paper. Even better avoid physical Christmas cards to friends and family use the Internet and save on paper and resources.

Avoid: Throwing your old cards in the bin...find a recycling point.

Presents: Buy presents that make a difference to the world as well as individuals. Look for gifts with natural components such as organic cotton or handcrafted toys made from wood. Buy Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified wood products...from wooden spoons to chairs these products really do make a difference to the management of our forests.

Avoid: Leaving remnants of gifts to the back of a cupboard. Pass unwanted presents to your local charity shop—there is sure to be someone who will like them!

Long lasting gifts with out the batteries. Use more imagination and less money—buy gifts that don't need batteries. Not only do batteries contain all sorts of nasty heavy metals and chemicals, they are also used vast amounts of energy to produce—well out of proportion to their power output.

Avoid: Buying appliances like televisions and stereos that consume large amounts of electricity while on standby. Believe it, don't leave appliances plugged in when you're not using them to avoid wasting energy. While you're at it, turn off all the lights when not in use.

Energy saving gadgets: Get family and friends together, snuggle up, play Christmas games and leave the car behind.

With these simple practical ideas, you can make a difference not only this season but all year round.

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3 months	3.63%	3.75%	3.75%	3.88%
6 months	3.75%	3.88%	3.88%	4.00%
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DOT and the Aloha Boardsports Team hope to grow the local surfing industry.

Sunday Biz

SURFING gives a thrill like no other.

Sitel bags 1st AmCham CSR Excellence Award

SITEL

Surfing company makes a splash in tourism market

IT PAYS! Isolated, but surfing can be learned.

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

THERE'S A SECRET but growing society of hard core surfers out there who believe that the Philippines has what it takes to become one of the best surfing destinations in the world.

Aloha Board Sports Inc. owned by 29-year-old entrepreneur Freddy Gonzales has made it its mission to make it happen through Onboard Philippines, a campaign to promote the Philippines worldwide as a premier surfing destination.

Gonzales, a surfing fanatic who picked up the sport during a 2001 trip to Hawaii, says the Philippines had a lot to offer because the country was blessed with a long coastline facing the Pacific Ocean, which means there are many places that surfers of all levels—from novice to expert—can go to throughout the year.

Surfers from other countries also exhibit the fact that there surfing sites in Zambales, Ilocos, La Union, Siargao del Sur, Camarines, Eastern Samar and Bicol State are not crowded unlike the more popular destinations in Hawaii, California and Australia.

Gonzales admits that there was a lot to be desired as far as getting to these destinations is concerned—with land airline connections and even worse road networks—but he says the Philippines was better because surfers in general are forgiving.

To these laid back and carefree sports enthusiasts, the challenging travel conditions only add to the thrill. As long as the waves are there, they're happy.

And what's more is that these are willing to spend top dollar to get their surfing fix, Gonzales says.

Enticing surfers

This was why it was not difficult for Aloha to get the Department of Tourism led by Secretary Joseph Ace Durano to join the Onboard Philippines campaign to entice surfers to come to the Philippines.

The cooperation with the DOT, Onboard Philippines hopes to grow the local surfing industry, capture the numerous opportunities that it presents for Philippine tourism as well as empower and support the country's growing community of local surfers, "Gonzales says.

He says the benefits from surfing were already being felt in destinations that have been at it starting nearly five years.

In San Juan, La Union, for instance, the number of tourists catering to surfers has grown from just three 10 years ago to about 15 today.

"We have to credit the Japanese and the Australians for having discovered surfing in the Philippines," Gonzales says. "Now they are encouraging the locals to appreciate what they have."

Baler, Aurora was the first surfing destination to be discovered and it was soon followed by San Narciso in Zambales and then Siargao in Surigao del Sur. Recently, the provincial government of Eastern Samar has joined the effort and is pushing

La Union, Aurora, Eastern Samar attract surfers from abroad

Ang Cabbuyao Island in Guiuan as a top surfing spot.

Said an iconic surfing sites appear on the map. Gonzales, an avid surfer and one-time professional football player, is confident that Aloha will grow along with the industry.

He says he has always been interested in pursuing up a business related to surfing and skating and he finally got his chance in 2000.

Right timing

The time was also right to indulge in his passion because his other business with his wife, Anne, which is distributing Quiksilver flip flops in the Philippines, is running along smoothly and could now do without his help in day to day operations.

He used to handle the logistics side of Sony's A.A. Inc. he has now delegated his duties to others so he could concentrate on growing Aloha.

"It was just me doing everything at the start with Aloha, from ordering to selling to keeping inventory," Gonzales says.

He started with an initial inventory of 20 surfboards appropriate for novices to professionals—ranging in length from a little over five feet to 10 feet long—that were sold through surf shops and other consignees like Ocsilod, 360 Northbay and SOS in Port Boulbacs.

As he sold more surfboards, Gonzales expanded Aloha's product line to include apparel and accessories. Plans are also underway to open the first Aloha store in January at the Boulevard Power Plaza.

"Hopefully, as the industry grows, we will be able to open more Aloha stores next year," he says.

From a one-man operation, Aloha's manpower has expanded to 10 and will further grow to 40 by the end of next month.

Gonzales is bullish over the prospects of the surfing industry because he expects more Filipinos to get into the sport through the efforts of Onboard Philippines.

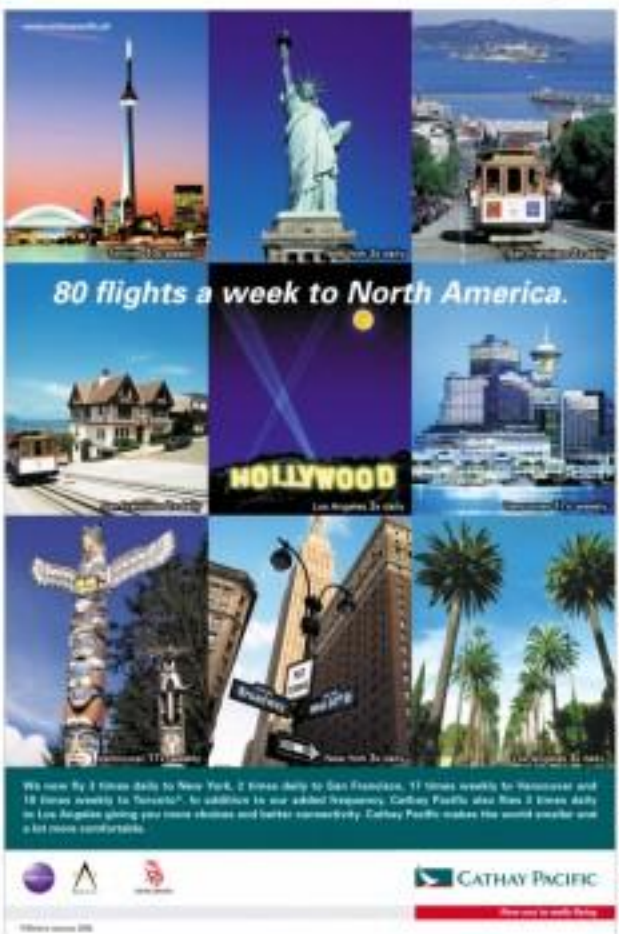
He said Filipinos just needed to be exposed to the sport and to get rid of misconceptions like that they need to be in top physical condition to be there to enjoy it.

Easy to learn

He said that on the contrary, surfing is easy to learn, provides a good workout and is a lot of fun. But those who want to try must have a sense of balance and be in decent shape. They can start with the mush boards for greater flotation before they go to the shorter, thinner boards used by professionals.

Surfing is not a cheap sport, however, as the good surf boards cost P15,000 for the short ones and as much as P40,000 depending on the length and thickness.

But as Filipinos realize what they have right in their own backyard and get hooked on the thrill that only surfing can give, Gonzales believes that they will find it worthwhile to invest in top quality surfboards that Aloha can provide.



Sunday LIFESTYLE

Lutong Pinoy

Count your blessings

As we say goodbye to 2007 and hello to 2008, take the time to count your blessings. It will fill your heart with gratitude and grace, as it did for the 12 people who shared their lists on pages C2-4. We invite readers to email us about their blessings at lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph.

By Gilda Cordero-Fernando

THE LIFE DRAMA OF THE PINOY
Is like Pilipino cooking
No recipe, no formula,
All judicious dash,
Kutob and tantya.
A whole lot of trials
Tama-tama, halo-halo
Tikim-tingda,
Tikim-tingda.

Once removed from the stove
You think, tapos na?
Hindi pa!
Now comes fine tuning:
Paste, kalamansi, bagoong,
Vinegar, garlic, soya
And tabing labuyo!
Ay—sarap na!
Don't edit a French chef
Like thus—I agree ka!

Adobo ni Inday different
from adobo ni Nancy
and adobo ni Rosa.
One hundred ways to cook adobo
Pati kangkong, pati pusit
Ikwento.

The pinoy's taste buds
Are homegrown—
To originality and multi-tasking
He's fatally ordained.

In a restaurant each pinoy
will order his own,
But "Waiter! Put everything
in the middle kasi everyone
will share share."
One slice of cake
—six forks!

Please pass that tasa kelly,
Patikim nemin ng sinigang!

In da future to come
When experiences abroad
Cause home to roost
And having begong passée
Ang matured
Sa choc-nut ice cream,
Durvan pie and lebing crepe,
Taba ng talangka gusto,
Sinigang na corned beef
And kamote fried?

Shall we ever sit down quietly
To a ravel, ignoring finally,
Tawag tawo ang tropla,
Oh ang galing-galing dia pati kalay

The pinoy has drunk the dregs
of sour cola and bitter eggs
Hinto na! Tama na!
Huwag maki-duterte, maki-dutae!

We've descended, after all,
from Lemuel Sino and Maharlika.
We've tasted dewan wine -
We know what it is to be sublime.
So we mounted a revolution
We replaced the whole cast,
The company we've chosen
is honorable as last.

Joke lang! Seri, pangarap!
Tinatrabaho na 'yan eyan.
Anlaya ng ang mata?
Pupunuh ka ng upper crust!
Kuning pulutan ng sandwich.
Shake, rattle and roll!
Whose do we trust?

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Name your blessings one by one . . .

By Constantino C. Tejero

LET'S HAVE A TRUCE ON UNhappiness. Let there be a cessation for with the ugly, the petty, the violent...just in duty at this time of the year. As one of the Ravenhoan brothers suggests, why don't we go out to the garden and produce one another?

No, we can't really count our blessings without sounding Pollyannaish, in the same way we can't countenance our medicine without looking—what? Shes Mawwwrage?

In a recent index of happiness, three of the most prominent factors that emerged were family, job and community. He had known that all along—in fact, it's all common sense...only that we hadn't formally acknowledged it until the statistics came out.

And what do you know, amid the sacred disbelief of skeptics and apostates, bleeding-hearts and communists, the statistics shows we are among the happiest peoples on earth.

Despite our footsies feeder status in terms of economic progress, political killings and government corruption, we are still stand with heads held up in the community of nations. For one, we can always take comfort in the international recognition of our singers, dancers and healers.

For another, there may be snakes and monkeys, crocodiles and dinosaurs in the Philippine Congress but, at least, they don't throw parabara and stuff and fall into fits of acrimony, slapping good hair-pulling as they habitually do in other countries.

And here's the big news: In the latest international index on gender equality, we ran No. 6, the only Asian country on the Top 10—way above the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, France, China, Russia. While women somewhere generally living it up in this country much more than most First World societies and the superpowers can offer.

Everything's cheap

What's not news but should be a constant reminder to foreigners and overpayers is that, the Philippines is one of the cheapest countries in the world. Stroll any day through our malls and marketplaces and see for yourself. Where else can you get a dish of Chilean sea bass or fillet of sole for about P180?

Culture here comes cheap. Enter an art gallery and chances are you'll find a small gem by a National Artist for less than P20,000, as even a national treasure here is a matter of P5,000.

The masses are regularly treated to free concerts, ballets and film festivals in parks and malls. The multi-trapped Pinoy is no stranger to "The Nutcracker" and Pagsisid.

Books, too, are cheap. If they're not getting any cheaper, because of the weak peso, they're still at 50 percent discount or more. That explains why a single title—"1001 Movies You Must See Before You Die," that we got for about P2,000 four years ago now has an updated 2007 edition for only P1,200.

Cheapest of all are the bracing DVDs, with a collection of up to 36 titles on a single disc which can be had for P88. Get 10 discs and you'd be watching one movie a day the whole year for P880.

We more eminently worthwhile regions, there are single titles on OPM-8 at P68 apiece. It may get richer people's backbone, but it can never be denied that this is the single flavor that has democratized art circles to such a degree in this country.

The range of the bi-above is paradoxical, not to say those can be found in malls from streets to malls from Apartt to Arlo. Here Smokeymans Cloud's masterpiece "The Wind" joins with the Bee Hive Mayer gave "Home, Pampers' KIDS KIT" And a Panorama to at Mayda (edition) classics classic free aide by side with the contemporary such here as the "Killer Pussy."

Identity and importance

As for happiness in the workplace, you're more likely to find it in a small-paying job that you enjoy than in one with a humongous salary but with a dreaded four-hour and soul-destroying commute. A journalist's is another big not small, but it is always an important job—and that's what keeps our heads up high.

Other policies can assume the lion's share of the credit for our happiness atmosphere of the court of lives, but we can countenance silliness anytime so long as there's an acknowledgement of spirit we'll done.

Now, the family—well, it's just there. The years have gone, a few have passed away, some differences have been settled, a few things may remained, but the family is still here.

We may soon be living apart leading our respective lives, but, as with the typical Filipino family, we still get together on special occasions wherever we are. We still return to our parents' places, into the hands or bedsheads of elders, even go to Mass together.

We know, of course, that family, which could mean relatives and friends, is the ultimate indicator of happiness. You may have become an orphan but the memory of it gives you confidence and strength, a sense of personhood, of identity and better times.

You may be living alone but the thought of seeing your family sooner or later is what keeps you going through the next year.

Back to the tribe

By Xandra Ramos-Padilla

THERE WAS A TIME WHEN I LIVED the expatriate life, believing that studying it in the global income would mean that I was accomplishing things. But I took a 180-degree turn, and came home.

I originally hesitated about coming home because I knew that moving back would mean rejoining a "tribal culture" and the daily routine usually dictated by family traditions. But coming on the past year, I am surprised that all the dreams I hoped for had been realized, and all because I had come home.

In one year, I got married, got pregnant and gave birth in the sweetest baby girl.

The pregnancy was very easy. I hardly did anything except go to the doctor every month, drink milk and vitamins, and the baby miraculously grew inside me as scheduled. When we were for ultrasound and saw our baby's face, she became very real to us, and we prepared ourselves to be parents.

After attending birthing classes for four Sundays and reading every book on pregnancy from National Book Store, I was all set for the birthing process. I was able to use the new birthing room and bed in Makati Med. My husband and mom took turns by my bed, while I was being hydrated. We were just reading magazines and doing crossword puzzles while waiting. The baby was in very stable and would not come out. Dr. Dagdag-Lopez monitored me constantly but after two days of contractions without progress, she told me I was go for a third day of labor or give birth by caesarean section. As my baby was born in the same day as my family tradition, which I believe will bring her much luck. My husband was in the delivery room with me.

When my baby was brought out of the delivery room, my mom kept her word to greet her first grandchild. She was immediately welcomed by her new son, Isla and the waiting outside.

Hooked

The baby stayed with us. My husband was afraid of carrying a tiny infant but on first try, daddy was hooked. He picked her up to sit in his and follow her.

It takes a tribe to raise a baby. We stayed in my mom's house for the first three weeks, and we had round-the-clock help. My husband was very supportive during my recovery, assisting me in going to the bathroom or getting out of bed. My mother-in-law visited us almost every day to help care for the baby. My husband's cousins and aunts are swaddling, burping and rocking. The baby's closet is now full of gifts from friends and family who visited that we hardly had to buy her anything.

I was very determined to breastfeed the baby so she can have all its benefits, but we had a very difficult time in the beginning, as the baby never learn latching, since proper latching requires techniques. She would get angry and frustrated or fall asleep and we were worried that she was not getting enough food. The lactation consultant, Liza Perez, came almost every other day to help us. She, the nurse, and my husband did all they can to assist me with different methods of holding the baby's head. I stayed home with her so I would not miss a feeding and I drank porone soup, malunggay pills and did everything I could to increase my supply.

Fertility, creativity

In Candace Myst' book, the energy centers that relate to sex is also the same energy for creativity. We spent the first half of the year planning Cravings: Th Home, a specialty home and fashion lifestyle store. Ideas and images flowed away in the back of my brain from travels inspired the store. Cravings: Th Home served over the top tea-coffee service, which I made from old fashion implements. The Soup Cravings: Pork ribs and Hostess ... Building these stores during her pregnancy and breaking them while taking care of a newborn was a juggling act. The interior designer and the Cravings team put the store together. By sheer determination and energy we pulled together and succeeded in opening the stores with tight deadlines. So now I have not just one but four new babies. I am now proudly look at the stores' eclectic mix of Asian designer brands as well as talented entrepreneurial designers creating affordable Filipino fashion labels, and I know I could not have achieved this if I had stayed abroad. I like to think we are offering an alternative in the competitive world of fashion and home retailing.

I've gone back to work part time, and I break up my day so I can get home to my baby in bed but. Never mind the hassle of going back and forth the malls. Whenever I need to go out, I can leave my daughter in either Isla's house with the yaya where there are many willing arms to carry her.

When I bring her to family gatherings it is a joy to see my relatives' faces light up when they see this new addition to our family. Those are the benefits of living in a tribe.

This holiday season was the best one ever as we celebrated our first Christmas as a family. It is so nice to run around to attend four family reunions in 24 hours, but it feels like everything fell into place. I can't imagine not being part of this tribe and I wouldn't trade this life for any other adventure in the world.

Grateful for leaving my comfort zone

By Pam Pastor

AT THE BEGINNING OF THE year, I declared 2007 as my year for adventure, as the year I would leave my comfort zone and try to live my life more fully. I've done just that...and I am grateful ...

For the chance to be braver than usual and the opportunity to take the plunge into new things.

For living in a country that has welcomed my explorations, that has allowed me to romp on icy beaches, climb its volcanoes and leap off its cliffs.

For being able to leap off other cliffs...like figurative ones.

For being able to bond with some of the most amazing people I have ever met.

For a family that treats me like an adult except when a little spoiling is necessary.

For friends who are my pillars, who have shown me unwavering love and support.

For love that has led to still deeper joy.

For lessons learned after being tripped to a seat that was being serenaded by rain, being smacked by mosquitoes and falling flat on my face and my rump in many different ways.

For an office that is never boring, his work that is really a great adventure.

For being surrounded by people who drive me to do more, who inspire me creatively and who make me love my job even more.

For someone that have helped me look at the world in a completely new way.

For a great 14-day adventure that involved three strange cities, chasing tornados, killing mosquitoes and taking over 40 rolls of pictures.

For being freed from the bondage of someone blogging.

For Multiply and the joys it brings.

For the chance to make music and to have people listen.

For facts that allow me to jump around strange and don't look me out.

For people—friends, strangers and those in between—who never fail to surprise in good and positive ways.

For the people who make beer and vodka.

For wine. I need more of it.

Thanks for the balance

By Patrick Garrido

COMING CLOSE TO FINISHING THAT PROVERbial balance between work and play, professors of life and private clinic, is perhaps the single most important lifelong on my list.

Despite a busy work schedule, I have had the time to travel to new places with close friends and family, to share discoveries and forge stronger bonds with them.

Similarly, at the end of each working day, it is always a welcome moment to find the chance to rest a while and've read a cherished book or ponder a favorite art piece.

From the last a few moments, I find it particularly fulfilling to be able to romp, as one writer put it, "that rich harvest of memory and introspection" at the close of each day.

From the monumental to the mundane

By Neal and Ginggay dela Merced

NEAL dela Merced and son Ming

AMID THE TENSION AND STRESS of 2007, we look at the plans as half-full, and we are appreciative. From the monumental to the mundane, here's a modest list of what we are thankful for.

... a new healthy baby girl, beautiful Chloe Dominique.

... our parents' continuing good health—nothing more important than that.

... our son Ming getting a bronze medal in Math—yes, that's super big for us!

... Neal's improving photography skills. Really! The investments on the camera is slowly paying off.

... our company's mentioned growth, thanks to the belief, trust, and support of our clients and the media.

... Trillanes not succeeding...we have enough national problems to deal with.

... the strong-looking yens.

... more and more Filipinos doing well abroad in business, design, arts, and more— they make us feel so proud to be Filipino!

... someone Zumbifying, which is good for the economy.

... the opening of Rockhaven High House—it's not Forbes family dominated, it's more quiet, beautiful park and great ambiance!

... heightened security in malls, hotels...makes us feel safer eating or love dining out and spending quality family time.

... the opening of Top in Manila. Can't wait for Baby Cup as well.

... most of all, we're thankful for family and friends. They're God's best gift!

An abundance of God's grace

By Agnes T. Hufana-Rosa

I BELIEVE THAT GOD HAS ALWAYS watched over me and my family. Despite difficulties and heartaches, things always fall into place in the end. I think it is that way for everyone. He just has a different way of working in each person's life. The new year is always a good time to stop and be grateful for all our blessings. They are so many, for what I am always most grateful for is the color and closeness in my home. Affection, hospitality and unconditional acceptance and love; support and unity that make all obstacles surmountable; the comfort of always laughing together and never crying alone; the warmth of welcoming family members home; the opportunity to share life and memories together; the daily gift of love.

God has also blessed me with amazing friends to share many years of beautiful memories with. I am blessed, as well, with a career and activities that make me fulfilled and allow me to play a part in the community. A career that provides me with new challenges and lessons everyday as well as allow me to collaborate with talented people that I learn so much from.

I feel blessed, as well, to have a place to always come home to and a country to be proud of. Despite our many difficulties, I believe the Philippines has much to be grateful for. A warm and generous people, the resiliency and faith of the Filipino spirit, a beautiful and varied landscape, a rich and colorful culture that is ever evolving, steady and certain progress, the boundless spirit.

The abundance of God's grace is felt in everything at every moment. I think the ability to recognize it and be grateful for it is a blessing in itself.

Grateful in Shariff Kabunsuan

By Rio T. Vergara

THROUGH THE YEARS, TVE CLIMC across a number of supposedly fabulous people who try to cut us fabulous, happy lives, but deep down you would somehow sense that something is amiss in their drab, miserable lives.

In contrast, I had the opportunity to travel earlier this year to a remote, God-forsaken mountain barangay in Shariff Kabunsuan, Maguindanao composed of indigenous people called Tiruray.

The day we came, the people—both young and old—were in a jubilant mood since they were just discovering for themselves the wonders of electricity, thanks to individual solar panels provided by the USAID. Each family has to pay for the panels in easy installments over the next three years.

The solar cells were enough for each household to power several lights for a couple of hours, a radio and a small electric fan.

We watched the barangay on a clumsy truck ferry in the afternoon. Its full tribal pride, the people greeted us with dances and ethnic music coming from traditional instruments like bells and gongs.

In lieu of fruit garlands, they welcomed us with woven necklaces they themselves made. Through it all, I couldn't help but feel like a long-lost member of Tiruray society.

It's probably safe to say that with or without electricity, the people live a basic life. No one, they have no running water, much less a water-sealed toilet, that I had to set aside my morning rituals until we had reached Cotabato City the next evening.

Most of these folks are subsistence farmers who have to walk or ride on horseback for several miles down rugged and muddy mountain trails just to get to the nearest bus stop—if there's no hint of rain—to transport their produce.

Risky

I experienced it for myself, riding in what they call Mobile or habal-habal—motorcycles that have been reengineered to fit in four people including the driver. It was, indeed, a ride my from the thrill it was. I once rejoiced in with a group of Filipino journalists in Las Vegas.

Now I know what it feels like to join a motocross. As we zigzagged our way through driving rain and occasional bursts of lightning, rush only seemed less important as Datu Kingdom Cotes in the form of steep terrain. I really thought I was going to die.

And if one is brave enough to continue into the mountains, he'd better off leaving the car or jeepney behind. Apart from the slippery, which changes as you and a big, the vehicles of choice in the hinterlands of Shariff Kabunsuan and Maguindanao is either a big 4-unit like this very we rented, a dump truck.

The problem was that it had caused the entire night and throughout the next day. As the driver of the dump truck refused to drive us back to the municipal. He would rather stay put in fear of his truck getting stuck in the mud along the way. I feel no choice but to hold on tight and leave my fate entirely to God and the Datuk driver.

The night before, during dinner, I was touched to find out that the village headmen were wired through the Gumbo of having several members slaughtered a cow and had just farm-cooked them a small fiesta in our honor.

We what I saw in their faces amazed and inspired me as such—a spontaneous kind of joy mixed with hope that things were going to get a lot better because of the availability, as we earlier learned, of electricity.

Children as well as the late barangay teacher and his wife were beside them: others with no elements as the kids could now study way into the night, while their mamas tended to various forms of livelihood projects such as basket weaving under a specially made fluorescent light.

Par-grated

Imagine, stuff we urbanites normally take for granted were now within easy reach of these people: they no longer had to go down the mountain and change their cell phones in the town since charging now cost just a plug away; mornings and village dances you'd be amazed at how jammed supermarket, which included Raymore, Black Eyed Peas, Pussycat Dolls and, of course, Madonna!) no longer had to be confined during the day.

Of course, the presence of electricity doesn't mean any of these would then suddenly wipe all their troubles away. For all I know, some of them might be more miserable now that they have access to it.

Still, with such a development, the pros will outweigh the cons. Indeed, I can go on and on about how happy and satisfied the people here become, but the point of my story is:

• We're far luckier and blessed than most other people.

• We do not know the value of certain things I and loved ones that we normally take for granted—like electricity and running water, for instance—until we lose them completely.

• You are so happy as you allow yourself to be. In other words, you determine your own happiness. You're greatly mistaken if you depend on others for it.

• You can thrive, if not blossom, wherever you're planted, be it in Manila, Cebu or Shariff Kabunsuan.

• You can't change certain situations (and that includes dead-end jobs, impossible co-workers, nosy neighbors, hot-weather friends and corrupt government), but you can certainly change the way you view or deal with such situations.

• Finally, despite the humanist that come our way with unexpected regularity both to individuals and as a nation, life is beautiful and too precious to flitter away dwelling over certain things, events and people we can never even change—at least, not for the moment.

Blessings come in the most unexpected guises

By Sheila Ratron

BLESSINGS COME IN the most unexpected packages.

The last year started with a knee injury that kept me wheelchair-bound, but ended in a round of golf on Christmas day!

My kids married badly needing singlemost but were on to prove that spectacles can't keep you so busy a mom operation on upset! They continued to pursue basketball, tennis and golf.

... And then there are the teachers, tutors, coaches, doctors and, more especially, grandparents, who shared with me husband and I the daunting task of parenting!

... A successful surgery to the family proved that things do work out for themselves somehow.

... My two brothers who have settled overseas are finding their way back home through work or the holidays.

... It was never too late for a mother to change her ways and communicate better with her children.

There was a failed friendship that reminded me to treasure my old ones and inspired me to build new ones.

... Our trust in Tokyo Tokyo offers each other good support in family members would, keeping the fun in the job despite demanding business processes of us as communicators in duality.

... The year was marked by typhoons, explosions, and a coup, but suffered by a growing culture of volunteerism and sharing, giving a lot more reasons to our day-to-day encounter.

... At the top of my list is the unconditional love from the happy boys in my life, which allows me to take the risks that I do.

... And of course, nothing beats the hugs and kisses I get every morning which make me want to count my blessings everything over and over again.

8 for which I am thankful

By Ric Francisco Prieto

1. The good health of family members and loved ones

2. The lucky Prieto and Tiroc expository

3. Prieto's new business deals and the growth of the current company

4. A peaceful family life and a home full of laughter

5. Old and new friends

6. A good relationship with Prieto and all the members of our franchise

7. Our work

8. Our Sunday ritual as a family

New Year countdown

TO CELEBRATE THE NEW YEAR countdown, Eastwood City presents festivities starting at 6 p.m. at the Eastwood Central Plaza, with The Members playing songs from the 1970s. Then, The Moonlights play lively songs from the 1980s at 7:45 p.m.

At 8:30 p.m., Richard Poon serenades with standards from the 1950s. Then, at 10 p.m., Eastwood City welcomes its new regular Monday night performer, Lulu, with her debut solo adventure performances. The Rage band performs the 1990s to New Wave songs starting at 11:30 p.m.

At the stroke of midnight, a fireworks display and laser lights show will illuminate the entire city skyline.

Dance the night away to Brazilian samba and house music with Brigada and DJ Chrissy starting at 12:30 a.m.

"With all of these exciting stars, music and fireworks show, Eastwood City is the best place to welcome the New Year with your loved ones and friends," said Megaworld Corporation Commercial Division head Kevin Tan.

To join the Prieto New Generation at Eastwood City, call 6076770 to 74 or text 0917-4889CITY.

Emily's Post

Emily Marcelo

One lucky girl

I HONESTLY THINK THAT I AM one lucky girl. No, I haven't won the lottery, or caught the heart of George Clooney. It just feels that way every time I wake up in the morning.

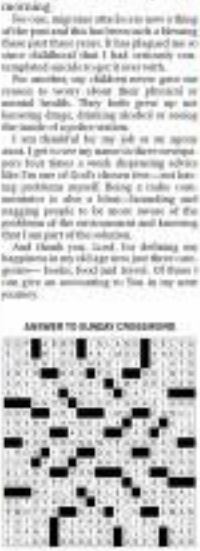
Because, nagsisimula ito sa isang bagay of like pero and this has been such a blessing these past three years. It has plugged me so much adulthood that I had certainly contemplated suicide a time or two or more.

Pero anyhow, my children never gave me reason to worry about their physical or mental health. They both grew up not knowing drugs, drinking alcohol or seeing the inside of a police station.

I was thankful for my job as an agency head. I got to meet my partners during the past four years a week depressing advice like I'm sure of God's chosen few—and having problems myself. Being a radio commentator is also a blessing—hounding and nagging people to be more aware of the problems of the environment and knowing that I was part of the solution to it.

And thank you, Lord, for defining my happiness in my old age now just three categories— books, food and travel. Of these I can give an unwavering to You in my new journey.

ANSWER TO SUNDAY CROSSWORD



Top 5 blessings

By Queena Lee-Chua

5 STUDENTS. TEACHING DOES not financially pay as well as other professions, but the emotional rewards are immeasurable. I am happy that the majority of my colleagues in math and psychology try hard to do their best, despite limited problems or adolescent angst. People – both young for my age – the sweet is to surround myself with caring people. Four contagious visionary students, to a blessing.

Aside from teenage college students, I have also had the privilege of teaching public and private-school teachers in graduate school. Some of them are older than I, but their energy does not waver. One teacher writes five novels after classes, on top of a caring day of handling 60 youngsters. Another thinks of creative ways to help his students master math. A third ensures that a sexually abused student will never again experience such trauma. Four inspiring dedication, teachers, to a blessing.

4 Colleagues. The daily exercise of teaching can be physically and emotionally draining. Not only do we challenge students intellectually, we also have to practically act as their surrogate parents as well. Many students confide in me about their family and relationship issues, and while I am grateful for their trust, helping them cope with depression, substance abuse, and family conflict is taxing. I turn to my colleagues to recharge myself. Your empathetic compassionship, co-teachers, is a blessing.

I also deeply appreciate the efforts of my colleagues in the fitness Best Practices team, who share parenting insights with thousands of public-school families. They help develop children into citizens our country can be proud of. Your unlimited generosity, colleagues, is a blessing.

3 Friends. In our busy lives, work is the priority. For the last several months, our high-school lunch has been planning for our 20th reunion next year, and my participation in the has been to send a group messages. At times, I feel guilty for not taking a more active role, but when I witness how enthusiastic my classmates are, I realize your time is devoted support. High school buddies, you are a blessing.

I need to host get-togethers for my college barkada, but again, over-school schedules get in the way. But I am so proud of them. Several are senior officers of big companies, yet they find time to volunteer in the parish and the community. Others are balancing corporate life with academe. Some are brainstormed on creating a fund to help underprivileged kids have access to education. Your steadfast integrity, college friends, is a blessing.

2 Readers and manners. It is a misconception to say that Filipinos cannot do much, or that they do not write letters. I have received more than a thousand messages from readers since I started writing for the business, from a 8-year-old girl who sent her class book picture to return for an autograph, to a 95-year-old engineer who asked for breakthroughs to keep his mind active. I also get more than 200 entries in my Christmas puzzle contest every December, the prize is one of my books (and not cash). I started writing for Lifestyle this June, and every week, I hear from readers. Positive request articles or communication or bookstalks, teachers appreciate innovative strategies and educators, students ask for tips in taking exams and mastering math. Someone once asked, "How do you get ten ten of things to write about?" Simple. I just open my inbox and find out what readers want to know. Your constant motivations, readers, is a blessing.

I never thought that I would become a teacher, but with the help of mentors, education has become my life's calling. Ateneo is my second home, and I am fortunate to have been guided by Jesuits and professors from various disciplines. I am also blessed to be writing for the business, where editors, publishers, and staff have always been encouraging. It means the world that my books remain relevant and accessible to the public. Your steady guidance, mentors, is a blessing.

1 Health. Sometimes we take our families for granted, yet they are the wind beneath our wings. I opened boxes standing in close everything and my love at be afterward. My husband manages them every night. My son pitches in, too, energetically pounding my back with his little hands. Our cuddles in bed are the highlight of my day. Four unconditional love, my dearest ones, is the sweetest blessing of all.

ROOTS AND WINGS
Cathy Babao-Gubaila

You are responsible for your contentment

THIS YEAR, THE BIGGEST DECISION I made was to stop working full-time to concentrate on my family and to (unwittingly) my son into his new school. The year 2007 is ending on the valuable lesson of learning contentment and just allowing myself to be in God's flow to the different areas of my life, allowing Him to lead and place me where I am most needed.

I always like to joke that today I am "posted" to some of the things that I used to indulge in, but also other in the things that truly matter. It is human to want what is on the other side of the fence, but having learned contentment this past year, I've realized that everything I ever needed was just right under my nose. Oftentimes, the Lord will use challenges to help us learn the rules of contentment.

Here are a few rules from Christian author, speaker and songwriter Traci Mullaldin on how we can begin counting our blessings and attain true contentment in the new year.

• Learn how to have conversations with God. Whenever you feel lonely or disquieted, the natural thing to do is to call a friend or someone you can pour your heart to. For others, eating or shopping presents a temporary balm to the pain. It will be much easier if we learn to run to Jesus first – our true source of Love. "Conversations with God fill your heart with peace, contentment and joy and when you take the time to really listen, He will show you how to fill the void in a way that is practical and productive."

• Learn how to give yourself away. When you share your time, talent or resource with others who are in need, the Lord will give you a new appreciation of your blessings. Last May, together with friends Alyn Fontanos, Nina Francisco and Odessa Rara, I put together Silver Linings '07, a small outreach for the local teachers badly affected by the typhoons. It was a small act of kindness in which we gave the women cookery kits for them everyday use, but the activity gave our time deeper meaning and appreciation for the little things we usually take for granted.

• Learn that you are responsible for your contentment. McPaddin says that it is very important that we do not become too emotionally dependent that we make pleasure out of our husbands, boyfriends, children, colleagues, and friends.

My husband and I both underwent major career transitions this past and for a while it was quite tense in our household. We had to constantly remind ourselves that this was another exercise where God was teaching us, stretching our spirits so that we could learn to be content under any circumstance and that we were responsible for our own contentment individually, and together, as a family.

Here are some suggestions from McPaddin on how we can secure our own and our family's contentment in the coming year:

• Spend time with God every morning. Get yourself a devotional and a Bible and soak up His word. They say that the Bible really is more than 1 instruction manual to navigate the road ahead.

• Spend time with your family – listen and encourage, don't criticize. Children love affirmation, so be generous in giving it at every chance you get.

• Be slow to anger and quick to forgive – yourself, your spouse and your children. Ask yourself: ...is this a matter of life and death? Or, will this really matter 10 years from now?

• Take a daily walk/exercise/yoga – I have found the 30-minute prayer walk to be an indispensable tool in keeping my sanity. Parenting after 40, with all the attendant hormonal changes, both for men and women, can be a challenge. Work on your strengths but also take extra care of yourself so you can keep up with the challenges of parenting. Teens and young children require a lot of energy!

• Avoid negative communication. Steer clear of emotional vampires or people who enjoy ranting other people down. Difficult as it may be, pray for those who like to perceive you. Let God take care of it.

• Don't be afraid of change, as of saying new things. There is nothing like learning new things with your children and going on adventures with your spouse or your kids.

• Have at least one friend who can make you laugh. In 2007, I grew immensely from the praying of some other mothers. In their place, God strengthened old bonds and also brought in new people, new experiences and new avenues for joy.

E-mail the author at cathybabao@gmail.com.

Know your astrology allies

By Marissa Allen

ALTHOUGH CHINESE ASTROLOGY BELIEVES that each of the 12 animal signs has its distinguishing characteristics, it also acknowledges that there are certain groupings of the animal signs that tend to think and behave alike. Because their thought processes are similar, they still tend to get along, and are said to be supportive of each other despite their different natures, their actions will tend to complement and focus out the best in each other. This pairings, partnerships, and marriages between any two animal signs within any of these groupings, also called the affinity triangles, have a better chance of success. It would save a lot of heartaches then, to know who your astrology allies are.

The Compositors: Rat, Monkey, and Dragon

These personalities are action-oriented, highly competitive, positive and determined. The first, who is massively insecure, benefits from the Dragon's courage and assertive self-confidence. The headstrong Dragon needs the craft know-it of the Monkey or the Rat's keen eye for opportunity. The Monkey, on the other hand, is energized by the Dragon's enthusiasm and the Rat's cunning and intelligence.

The Independents: Horse, Dog, and Tiger

These free spirits of the Chinese zodiac love freedom and are quite reckless. They are sensational, subjective, and highly principled. Among the three, the Horse is the strongest, but needs the Tiger's impulsive nature to get started, or the Dog's determination to see that things get done. The firm-once Tiger needs to be balanced by the Dog's good nature, while the fiercely loyal Dog has a calming effect on the restless Horse and the short-tempered Tiger.

The Intellectuals: Snake, Rooster, and Ox

These are the thinkers and the visionaries of the zodiac. They are purposeful, wise Silent, and have tenacious, unwavering, and strong personalities. The stable and stubborn Ox could use some of the Snake's charm or the Rooster's flamboyance. The Snake, though naturally crafty and ambitious, will get further if aided by the Ox or the Rooster. The Rooster's forthrightness will be tempered by the seductive Snake temperament or the Ox's work-solid approach.

The Diplomats: Rabbit, Sheep, and Boar

These are all peace-loving animals who believe in mutual cooperation. They can neither see tensions nor too active and also do not believe in accepting challenges and risks as they are highly sensitive animals. They also have great ability to think and seek sympathy, hence they are considerate, loving, and sympathetic with each other. The world is generally unaware of the Sheep's generosity. The Sheep in turn benefits from the Rabbit's sense of priorities. The Boar's strength complements the Rabbit's strategic thinking and the Sheep's gentle approach.

Each of the animal signs also has a secret friend to whom he/she can turn in times of need or crisis. The secret friends are the Horse and Sheep; the Snake and Monkey; the Dragon and Rooster; the Rabbit and Dog; the Tiger and Boar; and the Ox and Rat.

If a tough time is indicated for your sign, you can seek the help of your horoscope allies in lessons the lack of helpful people. One way to do this is to place a symbol of your secret friend or ally on your work desk for unseen support and to consider bad energies.

Trivia question

Aside from the Rabbit, which two animals are known as The Diplomats among the Chinese zodiac?

a. Snake and Horse
b. Tiger and Dragon
c. Ox and Sheep
d. Sheep and Boar

The Answer, Globe and fan-mixer three Chinese from this pointer answers in the question of the day and send to 3861 Call 9147888, 9187132, 4128888 or 0920-9069086.

PURELY PERSONAL
Josephine Barcary

Our Lady of Caysasay fluvial procession

WELL-KNOWN SCULPTOR RAYMUND Orbeta and businessman Rainie Villavicencio, as *hermanos mayores*, hosted a traditional fluvial procession honoring the Birth of Our Lady of Caysasay Dec. 8 and 9.

Mass was first celebrated in the morning of Dec. 8, feast of the Immaculate Conception, at the old church in Santo Tomas, Batangas. Then Archbishop Ramon Arguelles celebrated Mass at 4 p.m. followed by a floral procession.

Before the start of the procession along the Pasig River from Labac to the Basilica de Santisimo Rosario de Taal, reporter Rochelle Gonzales and actor Randy Gilango sang as the old Cabal house facing the river. Many more hymns were accompanied.

When the procession neared the house, Rosalie Bautista recited the lines in declamation in honor of the Virgin Mary) and Gooey Laurel and Miss Tere sang songs from the play "Caysasay."

That evening, lines of people waiting patiently along the river bank for the Virgin's arrival (boat) stretched to an hr away as Lenten.

Delightful picture

Young girls in colorful gowns walking up the Alto present a delightful picture. It is called the Alto (pull because the women pull the lights that originate from the Virgin's canvas.

Any picture is not complete without a female to provide evidence. It is usually led by dancing majorettes.

In the Basilica

When the procession reached the basilica, the hermanos carried the miraculous image to the altar prepared for her. People kept a (long) vigil and sang hymns until the Mass the following day.

Orbeta's daughter Ningning recited the lines from memory. Her devotion to the Virgin of Caysasay was instilled in her by her grandmother Paulina Gabal Orbeta who serves the basilica as "Mayor" in 1982 and also wanted to stage a play on The Virgin, but was thwarted by some people.

Finally, her son Ramon staged the play at the Cultural Center of the Philippines' Little Theater 20 years later, in July, 2006.

Thanks to Virgie Ramos Bautista, guiding of the parish pastoral council and the executive committee, the fiesta celebration was successful.

Santa Lucia well

The miraculous water from the Santa Lucia well behind the church in Lobtan is helping a lot of people get well. The image of the Virgin of Caysasay was reflected in the water hundreds of years ago.

Two women were collecting water from the well when they saw the face of the Virgin. When they looked up, they saw the Virgin on a passenger vest with a farglabor or canoe-away flying above her.

There is a plan to fix the surroundings of the well because the land around it has deteriorated. Those who want to help can text Ramon at 0917-8005188.

St. Therese church

The Active Group, one of the country's leading real estate developers in the past 37 years, received recently a memorandum of agreement (MOA) to donate a parcel of land located beside the Gate 2 entrance of the world-class Hyatt Manjayan Golf & Country Club and Residential Estates in Cagayan City for the proposed St. Therese of the Child Jesus Parish Church.

The MOA was signed by group chair architect Antonio A. Tarlac Sr. and vice chair architect Grietas S. Yuvallos.

A Concelebrated Mass was held by Lipa Archbishop Ramon Arguelles with Fr. Tan Sandoval of San Sebastian Parish in Lipa and Fr. Jun Quiambao, who will be the parish priest of St. Therese of the Child Jesus Parish. Groundbreaking and blessing of the land followed.

TEAM: Randy Gilango, pianist Mary Ann Espina, Lay-Ann Orbeta, Rachel Gonzales and Ramon Orbeta

Also present during the donation were Ann Antonio, resident manager of Manjayan Golf & Country Club; architect Augustus T. Fernandez, CEO, ART Properties, and Mike Cast, golf director.

A Holy New Year

Many and more people are seeking God in many ways. I have a strong feeling that the New Year will bring more conversions, a changing of ways. Let us all pray for that so when we find the peace within ourselves, we can make it a more peaceful world. A blessed New Year to you all!

GENEROUS gang Kenne Pascual, Sonia Quines, Ben Chan and Miguel Rodon

DUETS partner Billy Crawford with GMA executive Jhe Ing de Jesus, Gigi Santiago-Lara and Wilma Galvante

WHITE Christmas Holiday Celebration in winter colors

REEL over by Sonya Ocampo

GAWAD Kalinga Children's Choir

FANTASTIC FRIENDS. Virgie Ramos and Raja Laurel

What a blizzard 2007 was

LET IT SNOW! LET IT SNOW! Let it snow!

I really had a blizzard of abundant blessings for 2007. Here is my ABC list of things to be grateful for in 2007:

"A" is for my Assumption 8B Batch '81 classmates, especially Popsie Gamboa and Globe Bisnar, who have supported the many charitable activities that I have gotten involved in this year.

"B" is for Bench and beautifully blessed Ben Chan. For many years, Ben and his partner, Miguel Rodon, have supported all my projects with generous donations and prizes. It is always fun, especially as our annual White Christmas party where they fill my house with last hugs from their stores.

"C" and "D" are for "Celebrity Duets." Thanks to GMA's celebrity singing reality show, I won a million pesos for all the selected charities I support. Moreover, I have made so many new and wonderful friends from the show biz world. Hope thanks goes out to all my duet partners—Kyle, Juliana, Billy, Bella Mesa, Bibbo, Arnel, Jovit, Sheryn, Mandilyn and Bilmey—and all those who sent out SMS messages in support. Already!

BIQUERIA'S Thelma San Juan and Charissa Chaidez at Mandarin Oriental Hotel

FREEWAY Ladies Sharon Cuneta, Remy Rosas Chua and Kathy Qu.

Canonization

"E" is for Eugenia, as in St. Marie Eugenie, the founder of the Assumption, who was canonized before a huge Assumption crowd at the Vatican in 2006.

"F" is for Fiona and Freeway, my two dogs named by good friends Fiona Gangcuangco and Chito Hijastro and Ricky Velasco, who were fast to bring me goodies from their exotic buying trips, while Freeway comes courtesy Sharon Cuneta and Kathy Qu are always coming up with new designs to confound me.

"G" is for graduation, as my eldest son, Bryan, finished college in May. He has only turned out to be a mature and responsible person, a son to make any parent proud.

"H" is for Hollywood, which I had the chance to visit with Bryan in November. I love the fact that he gave me his first paycheck during that visit.

EMPHASIS Salon's Victor Ortega and Discovery Shores QM Jun Parreno

"CELEBRITY Duets" triplets Mendo Sherry Ehad, Popsie Gamboa and Marbee Garcia

"CELEBRITY Duets" Higher & Hayden Kho Jr., Frederick Peralta, Aces Tharwa Lizares, Tessa Prieto-Valdes, Jessica Besamusca, Tim Yap, Wyngard Tracy and Manny Cubacub

TESSA!

Tessa Prieto-Valdes

"T" is for treasures, of course! Special thanks go to the Lifestyle team—Cheche, my ultra-patient editor who never fails to remind me of deadlines, Albert who makes my layouts interesting, and the copyeditors who ensure that my words are grammatically correct.

"T" is for my daughter, Jeanine Amadeo, now a third grader at the Assumption whose greatest career ambition is to become me.

Kids

"K" is for my kids, all of whom continue to inspire me in so many more ways each day. Cher completed orbit, Tyrone finished grade school in April and is now in middle school at Brenton, the after-school tutoring needs are taken cared of by the Tutoring Club.

"L" is for the Little Gym, the play school of my youngest daughter, Athena. It also sponsored my trip to Hollywood to watch the premiere of the Disney movie "Enchanted." Thanks to their programs, Athena is learning to be a most notable toddler.

"M" is for the Manhattan Hotel, whose various restaurants my family has learned to love on Wednesday nights, when our cook has her day-off. I've also discovered their catering services for the first time, which no doubt line added quality and service to my party food.

"N" is for Nivea Baby products. Nivea head Shea Kling and brand manager Jackie de Vera chose Athena to be their spokesbaby this year, and she hasn't been the same since!

"O" is for our million, my prize from "Celebrity Duets." The record P100,000 donation was given last week to Gina Bautista Bhatia, president of the Association Missionaries of the Assumption.

"P" is for Primo, which I raised on the invitation of my friend Mary de Leon Balleza, to spend a wonderful week sailing, diving onboard the Ocean Hunter II in Boracay.

Queen of Peace

"Q" is for the Queen of Peace, our blessed Mother Mary. I must have prayed so hard to her during our Fatimaries tour of Spain and Portugal together with our teacher Georgiana Kintz and my dance instructor Jun Manlo.

"R" is for Rags Round, my monthly designer women's lunch-get-together. My closet is always supported by his House of Lanel, a fantastic fashion resource that more has men's and kid's lines to boot.

"S" is for Switch, an account I can't seem to do without. Thanks to Virgie Ramos of DR Gen, I never run out of new ways to tell time.

"T" is for Tuzzio Group, my interior design company that continues to soldier on looking for projects that might interest me.

"U" is for Urban Spa, that quaint little spa in the Shangri-La Plaza Mall which turned 15 this year and still continues to put the ooh in spa.

"V" is for Vicente Delerga, who always makes me look my best, thanks to wigs, like Deneuve false eyelashes and the wonders of Kryolan lotion.

"W" is for World of Frog Ideas. Owner Matthew Allen tells me that the coming year will be great for those born in the Year of the Rabbit, like me! I can hardly wait.

"X" is for GCX, my wonderful Mac laptop that handles all my photos and word processing needs—well.

"Y" is for yoga, the practice that keeps my world in balance. This year I'd like to send out a big thank you to my guru Trishanu Dhesi, Pye Dimidual and the rest of my fabulous yogis.

"Z" is for the last but not the least better in my life, my sassy hubby Dennis, who is always there for me, wherever it is, to step in my singing, to edit my writing, to watch over my diving or to pay for my shopping.

E-mail the author at mgarcesano@inquirer.com.ph

HAPPY New Year!

NIVEA Baby model Athena Valdes with Nivea brand executives Ida Diano, Rica King and Jackie de Vera

PRIDE grandparents Alex and Maria Prieto with son graduate Bryan Prieto

BROTHERS bonding in Boracay. Tyrone Valdes and Bryan Prieto

PRINCESS bonding with Princess Giselle at the "Enchanted" movie premier in Hollywood

LOVELY event: Mary de Leon

GRADUATION PARTY: Jan and Margaret Salazar, Alex Carpo, Mats Prieto, Erin O'Neill, Andrew Prieto, Pete O'Neill, Bryan Prieto, Tessa and Dennis Valdes.

AMA chmn Lumumba Popsie Gamboa, Sec Princess, AMA president Gina Bautista-Martin, Jojo Dagdale, Annabelle Bautista, Marietta Moores and Ira Martin

SPECTACULAR Dance Show of Cinejane Grey Dance and Art Center at the ROBC Auditorium

OCEAN Hunter II divs holiday: Dennis, Tessa and Annika Valdes, Mary de Leon, Jojo Cuneo, Kenn Vallagon, Gigi Santos, Cris and Bernard Hicks

Buddy

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COMMUNICATIONS
INFORMATION
ENTERTAINMENT
TRANSACTIONS

SMART
THE POWER TO LEAD

Sunday LIFESTYLE

Milestones

We welcome announcements of weddings and engagements. Submit names of engaged couple, names of parents, date and place of wedding, and gown designer along with a photo of the couple and a sketch of the bridal gown, if any, to the Features, Ph. Inq. 2083 Makati Central Post Office 1261 Makati City. E-mail to lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph. A photo of the bride and groom is required if the wedding has already taken place. Announcements will be printed depending on space availability and at no cost to the senders.

RIVERA-SAMSUDIO

Ray S. Samsudio, eldest son of Mansueto and Juliet Lumocso of Sagay, Occidental, and Ma. Marilouna C. Rivera, eldest daughter of Alex and Yolanda Rivera of New York City, will exchange vows on Jan. 5 at the Immaculate de San Antonio Mural in Bacolod City.

Marsden Cordova Iglesias designed the bridal gown, an all-white silk gazar cut finely into an princess punch and embellished on the bodice and train with different white and silver sequin beads, star glass beads and Swarovski crystals.

An intimate wedding celebration for family and close friends will be held at the Grand Ballroom of the Forest's Sugarland hotel.

DEINLA-CASTILLO

Freddie Deinla, son of Isidro and Eduarda Deinla, will wed Sheryll Castillo, daughter of Elmer and Aurora Castillo, on Jan. 12 at the Church of Nuestra Señora de Gracia, Guadalupe, Makati.

Eric Pineda designed the bride's stylized Filipiniana gown using handwoven jusi and silk gazar. Reception will be at the Manila Polo Club, Forbes Park, Makati.

SAYANOT-NOBLE

Erwein Sayanot, son of Danilo and Betty Sayanot, will wed Jo Anne Noble, daughter of Max and Mirth Noble, on Jan. 6 at San Agustin Church in Intramuros. Reception will follow at Ang Maynila of Manila Hotel. The bride will wear a creation by Mito Iturriaga-de Leon.

DULAY-SANTOS

Noel G. Dulay Jr., son of Noel Sr. and Gina Dulay, wed the love recently with Gloveen S. Santos, daughter of Drs. Charlie and Ishel Santos, at Chapel on the Hill in Nuvalita, Batangas. Reception followed at Santa's Secret Garden in Brgy. Estate, Cavite.

FLORES-PAYOT

Khaled T. Flores, son of Romulad and Ophelia Flores, wed recently Chiara Mae Payot, daughter of Perfecto and Pierpholla Payot, at St. Jerome Emiliani and Sta. Teresa Parish. Reception was held at the Vivere Suites Alabang. Lyle Rodel designed the wedding gown.

THE KIDS The family: Ruby Ardoin, Poging, Trixcas, Aussie dude, Lovely, the bride's cousins Esperanza, Sarah, Carla, Khalie, Monica, Carlos and Rajesh

THE COUPLE with the groom's cousins Betty Chua and Geraldine Edward Chua

A *medieval* wedding in the highlands

By Andy David
Contributor

THE MADRE de Dios Chapel of Tagaytay provides a quaint country setting for the regal wedding.

IT IS OFTEN SIMPLY A dream... a regal wedding to remember. Very few live up to what often begins and ends as imaginations of a grand wedding. The few that do come true stand out as the most memorable.

The wedding of Santos Khanzi and Howard Chua was the kind many people dreamed of but only very few achieved.

Santos is the daughter of Esperanza Abaya Khanzi and the late Abundio Paramount Khanzi. Howard is the son of Betty Chua and the late Miguel Chua.

The postcard-perfect Madre de Dios Chapel in Tagaytay, perched on a hilltop and overlooking scenic Taal Lake, was the perfect setting for the wedding.

The weather was mild and cool, the atmosphere, serene. Robert Shumacher was the priest behind the opulent yet elegant decor of the chapel.

The Manila Philharmonic Orchestra and the Antares Elite Choir performed for the guests who eagerly awaited the bride and groom.

Friends and family flew in from Canada, Qatar, Europe, Hong Kong, Switzerland, Taiwan and the United States. The reunion of the entourage, close family members and friends, looked regal in Grecian-inspired gowns complemented by the dressy designed by Antonio Ang.

The men were elegant in crisp black tuxes and suits.

As the first notes of the Wedding March were played, the chapel doors opened revealing the bride, a beautiful ethereal vision in delicate champagne color.

Santos's wedding gown, aptly Ang, featured a fully beaded corset and a flowing train and veil of shimmering silk organza, complemented by a pearled tiara.

The bride's makeup by renowned Lionel Bautista highlighted her bright, natural personality. Her stunning bouquet, on the other hand, was all white tea, a sharp contrast to her all-black entourage.

Most Reverend Teodoro Bacani, Jr., Auxiliary Bishop of Manila, performed the ceremony. Readings were carefully selected by the bishop and the couple's close friend Sheila Siberguez.

After the ceremony, cocktails were served at the chapel gardens, giving everyone a chance to enjoy the magnificent Tagaytay sunset.

Guests were then taken by a funicular train to the reception, the room giving them a unique viewpoint of Tagaytay.

At the Tagaytay Highlands Golden Lounge, guests were greeted by a grandiose spectacle designed by Edmardee that transformed the area into a romantic medieval court filled with flowers, rich drapery and opulent chandeliers.

The majestic garden from Raul Ordoñez, alongside the decorative tents and Gold Tiffany chairs by Tino Rasquero, enhanced the medieval look.

Table settings, inspired by the dolmenon Round Table, were done by close friend and interior stylist Sofia Sarthou.

The buffet offered a feast fit for a king. Its less impressive, the dessert table featured a lengthy line of sweets designed by Chef Gus Rivera of Sweet Bella.

Music by the Manila Philharmonic Orchestra and voices of the Antares Elite Choir filled the hall. With the temperature dropping to 9°C or less (cold, even for locals because it is), even the hosts became huggy.

The entrance of the bride and groom was signaled by extraordinarily joyous music, jet smoke and glittering silver confetti.

Sparks flared, new changed into a crystal-beaded backless gown, for Llamas took photographs of the once-in-a-lifetime event.

A touching audio-visual presentation, "A Fairy Tale Love Story," was produced by close friends. It traced the beginnings of the couple's romance, from the time a mutual friend introduced the two to the Ayesa countship.

Howard described his new bride as "My friend for years, my girlfriend for eight and my wife... forever..."

It was the touching highlight to a romantic wedding.

AT THE altar with Bishop Ted Bacani

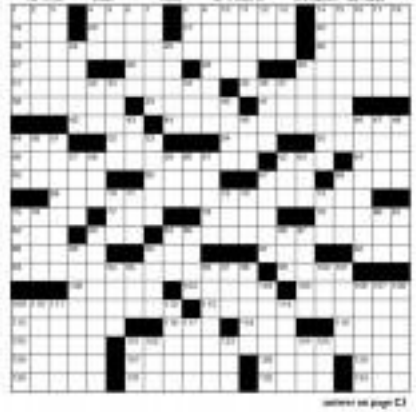
NEWLYWEDS Howard and Sandra Chua (née Khanzi)

THE PICTURE-PERFECT couple with friends in the lounge/lobby-styled reception by Robert Shumacher

Sunday Crossword

PREMIER CROSSWORD/ By Frank A. Longo

ARRIVALS



answer on page C3

WITH the groom's family

Smart Takes The Lead In Keeping Overseas Filipinos Connected

Stakeholder Forum Tackles Welfare Issues Of Pinoys Overseas

In recognition of the significant role that overseas Filipinos play in nation-building, government agencies come together with non-government organizations to tackle in a stakeholder forum the protection and welfare of overseas Filipinos.

The 2007 Forum on Filipinos Overseas: Elevating Standards for the Protection and Welfare of Filipino Migrants was recently convened by the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO), with the Philippine Migrants Rights Watch (PMRW) as co-chair, in celebration of the Month of Overseas Filipinos and International Migrants' Day.

Leading wireless services provider Smart Communications, Inc. (SMART) joined the initiative. The participation of SMART, one of the government's most active partners from the private sector, fit perfectly into the forum's aim. The cellular leader has been making advanced mobile communication services available and accessible to millions of overseas Filipinos and to their families back home, underscoring how increasingly valuable communication has become for this community.

Vice President Noli de Castro outlines the government's program to promote the welfare of overseas Filipinos.

Keeping families connected

Bundled under the name SMART Pinoy, the cellular operator offers a number of services specifically tailored to cater to the needs and lifestyles of overseas Filipinos, such as international roaming, international texting, and the world's first SMS-based cash remittance service called SMART Padala.

SMART Link has been made available to seafarers, enabling them to get in touch with family and loved ones at home. Demand for the satellite phone service has grown since its coverage was expanded from Asia-Pacific to the Indian Ocean, the Middle East, and Africa.

Another new service, being offered in cooperation with Irish company Blue Ocean Wireless, is in the works to allow Filipino seafarers to send text messages using their GSM cell phones on board merchant marine vessels in the middle of the ocean. Later, seafarers will also be able to send MMS, keeping them more closely connected with their families back home.

Helping OFWs reap the benefits of hard work

Through its partnerships with major local banks such as Banco de Oro (BDO), Rizal Commercial Banking Corporation (RCBC), Land Bank of the Philippines (Landbank), Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP), and China Banking Corporation (Chinabank), SMART will soon offer more innovative remittance services, through a global financial and telecommunications services model based on the award-winning SMART Money mobile commerce platform. These partnerships will enable SMART to offer services that will allow overseas Filipinos to send money to the Philippines in a more efficient and convenient manner, and at a much lower cost.

In recognition of the need to assist overseas Filipinos with livelihood and reintegration upon return home, a P1 billion loan facility has been made available by the DBP to returning overseas Filipino workers to help them set up small Internet cafe businesses, powered by SMART Bro, the cellular leader's advanced wireless broadband technology. The program aims to help the OFWs and their families make better use of remittances and savings.

SMART's partnership with Landbank and CFO brought about the Kaya sa Dollar Card. This card, initially available in the United States, enables Filipinos abroad to have a local Landbank account where they could channel all their remittances or fund transfers for their donations, amortization payment for all their loans, investment placements and most especially for family support, education or tuition payment, among others.

Serving the needs of overseas Filipinos

Vice President Noli "Kabayan" de Castro, delivering the keynote message, summed it all up for the forum participants when he said, "Let our focus and passion be directed towards one objective – that of promoting the protection and welfare of overseas Filipinos."

With many more innovations in the pipeline, SMART continues to do its part. It continues to create services that will enable its technologies to become powerful tools for protecting the rights and welfare of Filipinos overseas. It will continue to develop groundbreaking services that will make life more productive, pleasant, and rewarding for Filipinos living and working at home and abroad.

SMART
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THE TRION TOWERS
ROBINSONS LAND
CORPORATION
A Breath of Fresh Air

Sunday LIFESTYLE Travel

Some of the unique things at Lamuro are of the fancy variety that is the stuff of glossy travel magazine spreads

Idyllic yet imperfect just like home

By Emma O. Velarde

THERE'S A COCONUT TREE TO THE right of the parlo, facing the sea, that the houseman Delfin would eagerly climb so we could get our fix of fresh buko juice any time of day for three days, the whole length of our stay.

For sure this is what Ikeda—our Japanese guest on a first venture out of the United States, where he lives—will remember most about Lamuro Resort in El Nido, Palawan.

Within the hour of our arrival, he had found a mantra—"Buco ... wow"—and a new friend in Delfin, whose name he struggled to pronounce till the day we left.

High Cholesterol?
A Healthy Stomach Helps Prevent Heart Disease

Christmas is usually the time when you enjoy sumptuous feasts that are high in cholesterol. However, high cholesterol level may lead to stroke or heart attack.

Greet the New Year with good health. Fight back with C-Lium Fibre!

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EL NIDO is a thousand shades of blue melding into green.

Idyllic yet imperfect just like home

Pretongue E1

Certainly there are other unique things about the place—owned by Australia-based businessman Debbi "Roy" Tagle—a host of them of the fancy variety that is the stuff glossy travel magazine spreads are made of.

Protestant of those will have to be Cadlao Island fronting the property, just distant enough to eat a dash and rugged, and mysterious, silhouette. Another is the main house at dusk when, returning from a day of island-hopping, we were amazed at how the lights seemed to set it ablaze.

And, for the adults in our party-of-eight, still another has to be the look at the far end of the garden—actually the massage hut—where our families for worrying were gently called by the hands of Eva, the chief therapist, or rendered away by the sounds of the surf.

Somewhere in November, though, these sounds go from calming, to hypnotic, to humorous. According to Cadlao, acting manager, waves had come up to the edge of the lawn the previous week.

I suspect there is a patience to these sounds that is identifiable if one sits out there long enough or the elderly were owing—not the old hammock sort to it that guarantees 40 winks—and really listen.

I was ecstatic to pick out four seconds of total quiet after every seven nanoseconds. Followed by a sudden pounding and a mighty swoosh. But that sense of knowing did not last very long, the sea being, I bet, a woman who became supercharging figured out.

In many ways, Lemery—named for the managing where it is located—is like home. You get the jungly familiar as much as the uncomfortable, the idyllic as much as the imperfect.

There is no swimming pool, nor its poolside where a Tom Cruise or Bryan Brown type flies cocktails at an outdoor bar. The garden is just grass, a sprinkling of peninsula, and the bird-laden coconut trees.

But the tourist have full air-conditioning and hot showers, and the kids were thrilled by the very idea of lofts.

We were served a great deal of food as well, which came with the package. The first meal was quite a treat, since we had left home at 5 a.m. to catch the Seastar flight at 6:30 to El Nido via Busuanga.

And so we were sufficiently distracted for exactly an hour and a half, the time it took to have little 18-seater plane lands at El Nido airport just before noon) and settle in.

Immediately after coffee, we were served. The efficient resort staff, which really seemed like a household's, was prepared for that. Soon enough, the waiter Oscar had discarded his apron and announced he was our tour guide near but would find out later that Debbi was also chief of maintenance, and Eva, chief of housekeeping).

A boat materialized on the beach. At Debbi prepared to load a small sack of bare, he said we were going snorkeling.

Afternoon delight

Boat lunch was a delight. There wasn't a lot to boast about in the snorkeling department, but the photo-op was great, and the overall feeling was that this part of the world was worth all the hassle and the rain. Wait, what hassle, indeed?

Even an unexpected drizzle was easily welcome, except when we sailed back in monsoon, scrapped to turn travels and chased by a chilly wind.

Island-hopping

Close to 300 snapshots until he swoop. They confirm the astounding recollection of island-hopping on our second day. A thousand shades of blue melting into green, with intermittent splashes of bright orange and yellow, the colors of life were that we were obliged to wear like second skin.

Oscar's spiritual, tentative shadow is continued to maneuver as well. The world-famous bird's nest was still harvested in El Nido, he said over the drone of the boat motor, but the volume had been regulated, lest the migrant birds never came by again.

The island on which we were to set up lunch was named after a Japanese diver, Oscar said, so we disembarked on Shimizu Island after a whole morning of kayaking and more snorkeling in the fabled Small Lagoon. The diver was trapped in a nearby underwater cave and never emerged. Its body was never found, Oscar added.

Two European tourists walked by and stopped a while to admire the table setting of fruits, barbecue and buco juice. We wondered whether to invite them to the meal but decided against the idea, noting that they had company just a few meters away and another small boat was approaching.

SOLITUDE is a refreshing experience.

The Big Lagoon looming incredibly grand right before your eyes house the best and biggest pockets of it. To sound disturbingly cliche and say it's everything you'd expect and more, would be just half of the story.

And stopping by a small cookie island, actually a long sandbar, it was hard not to wonder, "Did the Bird Inn really post when it supposedly did, or had the Israelites simply come upon one such white of nature? (John.)

That splendid second day was capped with a stop for refueling at the town proper, where we found Arts Café, and bought what is soon one favorite souvenir in a growing collection—almost two ounces of genuine rain wood—and not the most expensive of the lot, so there!

Back at Lemery Resort that evening, a homemade chocolate cake was waiting for an already overwhelmed birthday celebrant who gushed, "One more surprise and I'll be over the moon."

Well, were the moon she went just less than an hour later at dinner, when an acoustic duet took one corner of the patio and started singing her favorite songs, while she tried not to choke on succulent lobster.

It was, according to Eleanor, Lydon's extravagant, the resort's final treat for all departing guests.

That weekend, we were all the guests they had. So, previous fortune! It's never easy to leave behind.

Travel Briefs

Special family package

CENTURY PARK HOTEL IS OFFERING local residents until Jan. 8 a special family package for P5,500 net per night. The package includes breakfast buffet for two adults and two kids (children 12 years old and under), swimming pool pass, free use of the gym and other facilities. The package also includes a basket filled with products from Bandayan, Divine Delight, Smiley's, Bar-Cha with Ika, Fresher Exotic Polvoria, Bonanno Specialty Drink, etc. (CORRIES or CORRIES)

Budget-friendly trips

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'Specialists' on fam tour

NORTH AMERICAN TRAVEL AGENTS toured recently Manila, Bohol, Cebu, Palawan and Corregidor as part of the Department of Tourism's (DOT) Philippine Specialist Program. Thirty agents from 18 US states and two Canadian provinces, "Philippine Specialists," visited the Chocolate Hills in Bohol and Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park, as well as affected beach and diving destinations in Bohol, Cebu and Palawan. They also made a courtesy call on Secretary Joseph "Ace" Durano and Planning and Promotion Undersecretary Eduardo Jurgas Jr. The specialist program is a DOT online educational program for travel agents in North American that introduces participants to major Philippine tourism destinations.

THE PHILIPPINES Specialists visit Tourism Secretary Joseph Durano (center) and Undersecretary Eduardo Jurgas Jr. (left, first row) at the DOT office in Manila.

Entrepreneur of the Year Bounty Agro Ventures Inc represented by Jovon Dy and Mark Triay awarded by SM Supermarket's President Herbert Sy and SM's President Tessie Sy-Coson.

Best Marketing Relations or the Darling of the Buyers" , Jun Alberto of Royal Processing & Canning Corp with SM Supermarket's President Herbert Sy and Annie Sy Go.

Francisco Lazaro and Allan Rex Ardova of JS Unitrade received the Golden Cart Award for National Partner of the Year from President of SM Supermarket Herbert Sy and President of SM Tessie Sy-Coson.

SM Supermarket Awards Outstanding Business Partners

SM Supermarket's President Ms. Herbert Sy welcomes Trade Partners during the 22nd Golden Cart Award at the Science Discovery Center.

SM Supermarket awarded its outstanding trade partners in the 22nd golden Cart Award at the SM Science Discovery Center at SM Mall Of Asia.

Christine Jacobs-Escalgan hosted the 22nd Golden Cart Awards at the SM Science Discovery Center.

SM dancers shows their futuristic moves during the awarding.

Mara Sy-Coson endorses the limited edition of 2008 SM Mall of Asia's Planner.

Diva Zia-zas Padilla performed during the awarding night.

SM Supermarket recently presented The **Golden Cart Award**, the most prestigious award in the supermarket industry. This ceremony, which took place at the Science and Discovery Center at the SM Mall of Asia, significantly highlights how forward-looking SM Supermarket is in its innovations and customer service. It is a testimony not only to the SM Supermarket's market leadership and consistency, but also the trust and acceptance it has earned by bringing quality products and excellent service to its consumers for many years.

The **Golden Card Award** is the first local supermarket award to recognize the **Best Trade Leaders** in the different aspect of the supermarket industry. A symbol of excellence in creating advancements in retail, the award is given to Trade Partners who exemplify SM Supermarket's dedication to being the First and the Best in the business.

All nominees were meticulously screened and chosen with all departments and aspects of the retail business development, marketing support, replenishment, and distribution of logistics support.

The highest award of the night is given to the supermarket's **Most Outstanding Trade Partners** for overall excellence in service level, marketing and promotions, and store relations. These include the **Bounty Agro Ventures Inc.**, for Entrepreneur of the Year; **JS Unitrade** for National Partner of the Year and **Unilever Phils Inc.**, for Global Partner of the Year.

Unilever Phils Inc., bagged the highest award of the night Most Outstanding Trade Partner-Global Partner of the Year, and other awards like Outstanding Store Relations, Most Progressive Overall Customer Service Level, Best In-store Campaign of the Year and Most effective (Ad) Campaign of the Year.

Other Trade Partners that brought home the Golden Card Award are:

San Miguel Corporation (CKAG) - Most Innovative Company -
Unilever Phils. Inc. Food Division - Most Progressive Customer Service Level
Colgate Palmolive Phils. - Most Creative In-Store Display
Pacsin - Most Competent Food Concessionaire of the Year
Knorr Strabswerg Caley - Most Effective (Ad) Campaign of the Year
Unilever Phils. Inc. Food Division
Coca Cola Bottlers Phils. - Most Progressive Trade Partner of the Year
Digital Issa Corporation - Outstanding Service Partner of the Year
Blue Mountain Worldwide Dist. Inc - Outstanding Store Concessionaire
Unilever Phils. Inc. Food Division - Outstanding Store Relations
San Miguel Corporation CKAG (Purefoods) - Excellence in Merchandiser Performance -
Choice Harvest - Excellence in Account Management
MGM Chemical Industry Co. - Excellence in Delivery Service
Green Cross, Incorporated - Excellence in Overall Customer Service Level
Unilever Phils. Inc. Non-Food Division - Best In-Store Campaign
Jun Alberto of Royal Processing & Canning Corp - Best Marketing Relations
Belo (Intelligent Skin Care Inc.) - Breakthrough Product of the Year

Breakthrough Product of the Year- Belo (Intelligent Skin Care Inc.) - From left) SM Supermarket's President Herbert Sy, Belo's Cristelle Herrares, Greg Ranson, Sirene Pandugan, Lervie Mendiola, Dadie Borja, SM's Annie Sy Go, and Belo's Dennis Galeb.

SMART GOLD

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ENTERTAINMENT

Edited by Ernesto C. Velarde

Mexican filmmaker 'not obsessed' with H'wood

Gustavo Loza conducts Mowelfund workshop, and says he learned a lot himself from his Filipino counterparts

TAKE FIVE

By Bayani San Diego Jr.
Photos courtesy of Mowelfund

MEXICAN FILMMAKER AND first-time Manila visitor Gustavo Loza couldn't contain his excitement over his trip to Quiapo.

The downtown icon was the "culminating activity" in a three-day directing workshop that he conducted recently at the Mowelfund Film Institute in Quezon City. The intensive workshop was spearheaded by the Mexican embassy and Mowelfund. Among the 10 workshop participants were young Filipino filmmakers Jaimes de la Cruz and Mike Enebolan.

Loza had been determined not to limit his visit to the posh malls of Makati, where his film "El Otro Lado" was screened.

Also in Loza's itinerary, according to Nick Deocampo, Mowelfund director, were Pagsanjan, Intramuros and the dreary towns of Sampaloc.

A Bert report says Loza, whose "El Otro Lado" was the Mexican entry to the Best Foreign Language race at the Academy Awards last year, hopes to meet with Latino superstars Javier Bardem, Benicio del Toro and Andy Garcia in his next movie.

(The interview with Inquirer Entertainment was conducted with translator Carmen Elfrieda of the Mexican embassy.)

What was it like for you, interacting with the Filipino workshop participants?

My satisfaction. Some of the participants already had past filmmaking experience, which enriched the workshop all the more.

What questions did they ask?

[They were] very interested in the new wave, the new generation of Mexican filmmakers ... in the way things are developing—visually, and in terms of content.

How do you position yourself in this new wave?

I see myself ... following in the footsteps of Alejandro González Iñárritu, Alfonso Cuarón and Guillermo del Toro.

Those Mexican filmmakers have been discovered by Hollywood. Are you willing or ready to go Hollywood?

My credo/aim is to tell the stories that I find interesting. My goal is to reflect life as honestly as I can. If I were given opportunities to work in other countries, I'd be willing to go. If it's in Hollywood, so be it. But I'm not obsessed with making Hollywood movies.

Why are you shooting in Quiapo?

The [workshop] participants will make a 10-minute short film from their environs. I want to see Quiapo through [their] eyes.

How familiar are you with Filipino movies?

The workshop participants gave me samples of their works, so I'm bringing home lots of Filipino films.

What have you learned from them so far?

That we share a lot of things in common. Religion, food. It's surprising that I'm miles away from Mexico, but I still feel at home here. Another important thing I've noticed is that Filipinos are more Latin than Asian in temperament. The stories in Mexico and the Philippines seem parallel.

"Amores Perros" could have been set in Manila.

Yes! We were both under Spanish rule and there's also US influence in our societies. We have the same social and economic problems, especially in the big cities: poverty, inequality, instability. Since we have the same problems, we can also work to overcome these obstacles together.

What are the stories you'd like to tell in your movies?

I'd like to speak about the human condition. But I like to present things in a positive light. The tendencies in Mexico is to show the worst in life/situations recently. To tackle the gray, harsh realities of life. What I try to do is to show hope and possible solutions to the problems. For me, it's important to show life through children's eyes because they look at the world with innocence and a sense of magic.

Magical realism is a tradition in Latin

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Your life as a movie

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GALLERIA

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METRO EAST

1 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
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NOVALICHES

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5 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO
6 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
7 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
8 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO

PIONEER

1 RESIKLO
2 BAHAY KUBO
3 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
4 KATAS ng SAUDI

STA. ROSA

1 RESIKLO
2 BAHAY KUBO
3 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO
4 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
5 ENTENG KABISOTE 4

LIPA

1 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
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4 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
5 RESIKLO

DASMARIÑAS

1 RESIKLO
2 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO
3 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
5 BAHAY KUBO

IMUS

1 RESIKLO
2 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
3 BAHAY KUBO
4 KATAS ng SAUDI
5 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO
6 ENTENG KABISOTE 4

ANGELES

1 RESIKLO
2 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO
3 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 4

TARLAC

1 RESIKLO
2 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
3 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9

STARMILLS

1 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
2 BAHAY KUBO
3 KATAS ng SAUDI
4 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO
5 RESIKLO
6 ENTENG KABISOTE 4

BACOLOD

1 BAHAY KUBO
2 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO
3 RESIKLO
4 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
5 KATAS ng SAUDI
6 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9

ILOILO

1 RESIKLO
2 SHAKE RATTLE and ROLL 9
3 BAHAY KUBO
4 KATAS ng SAUDI
5 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO
6 ENTENG KABISOTE 4

Mexican filmmaker 'not obsessed' with H'wood

From page E1

theories. Do you see that in your movies?

It's true. In one scene in 'El Otro Lado,' I did that by recounting a Mexican legend. It definitely enriches my stories and connects it more to my people.

Which filmmakers do you admire?

I have great respect and admiration for Guillermo del Toro ("Pan's Labyrinth"), who is a friend. Aside from being a great filmmaker, he's a great human being. You can see that in his movies. I also respect Guillermo Arriaga, scriptwriter of "Babel" and "Amores Perros." He's been a friend for years. He sees life story has been a continuous struggle as well.

What are your future projects?

My next movie, tentatively entitled "Family Dreams," tackles the story of a gay couple who wants to adopt a child. It asks the question, "Is parenthood a privilege exclusive to heterosexuals?" I plan to start shooting next year.

AT THE CINEMAS

GLORIETTA 1	1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL X	2 BANAL KUBO	3 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	4 BANAL, BANAL! BARLOCO
GLORIETTA 4	1 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL X	2 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	3D ENTENG KABISOTE 4	
	4 BANAL, BANAL! BARLOCO	5 BANAY KUBO	6 BANAL, BANAL! BARLOCO	7 RESIKLO
GREENBELT 1	1 BANAL, BANAL! BARLOCO		2 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	
GREENBELT 2	1D ENTENG KABISOTE 4		2D BANAL, BANAL! BARLOCO	
	3 RESIKLO	4 BANAY KUBO	5 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL X	
ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1D BANAL, BANAL! BARLOCO		2 ENTENG KABISOTE 4	
	3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL X	4 BANAY KUBO	5 RESIKLO	
AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 BANAL, BANAL! BARLOCO	2 BANAY KUBO	3 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL X	4 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
MARKET! MARKET!	1 ENTENG KABISOTE 4		2 RESIKLO	
	3 BANAY KUBO	4 BANAL, BANAL! BARLOCO	5 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL X	
TRINOMA	1 RESIKLO	2 BANAL, BANAL! BARLOCO	3 BANAL, BANAL! BARLOCO	4 ENTENG KABISOTE 4
	5 BANAY KUBO	6 SHAKE, RATTLE & ROLL X	7D ENTENG KABISOTE 4	

AT THE MALLS

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Still 'Enteng' vs 'Saka'

"ENTENG KABISOTE 4" LEADS AT THE tills with P42 million on the third day of the MMFF, followed by "Sakal, Sakali, Sakalo," P3MF, and "Shake, Rattle and Roll 9." 9:07PM, according to the Gerardpan, MMFF executive committee member. Total commercials earnings of press time is P129 million. Reynard San Diego, Jr.

Latest singing buddies: Gretchen and partner Tonyboy Cojuangco

By the Inquirer Entertainment Staff

PHILWORLD THINK THAT MEDIA caught Bembol Cojuangco's niece Dodi doing singers?

At the Christmas party for one of his companies, he reportedly belted out "What a Wonderful World."

According to partner Gretchen Barretto, he has also consented to write a duet on her second CD (which will be given away free, to friends and fans).

Why this sudden musical turn? It must be because Tonyboy has the same dream doctor as Diane Julie Anderson. Hot with, hasn't she stopped singing?

Proud daughter

Beautiful Actress was accosted by Cory Director at a show biz gala.

With the sense of shocking the girl, CB quipped: "Do you know that your dad was the breadwinner of the family?"

Indignantly, BA retorted, without missing a beat: "Uhmm"

CB told Bayless, "I should've said her dad was also the boyfriend of one of the richest guy (not to be rude)!" Wonder how she'd take that?

Raising hands

Pretty Young Thing (not Talented Celebrity) during the shoot for a TV commercial, according to PST, MC, promptly begged for her cell phone number.

Next thing you know, she was "forced" to share a "candid" scene (on set) with MC—and MC's wife threw a mega-eye tantrum despite an evil family vacation in Boracay.

Neowatt ripadas

MD (CBN) Angelika de la Cruz is heading back to GMA-7, and GMA-7's Ara Mina is reportedly taking Angelika's place on the Cagayan-Iligan afternoon soap, "Princess ng Buenos."

Ara could no-doubt she is, indeed, appropriate "Princess."

She supposedly got irked after GMA-7 topnotcher Jo-ahn Jhe de Mesa's name on the new soap, "Sobrenger Ako't Inahanggin Ko Ito," Mmm? Hmh.

Top of the tabloids

The top three hit stories in local tabloids this week. (And why we are stoned, if we are stoned.)

• Nakitang magka-holding hands sa Dear Ever... Willie Revillame, Gretchen Barretto mga (siyempre? don't me back with Dennis Padilla? Well, as Ate Ara would say, "Malaki na siya!"

• Buntis Garcia at Gaga Bonalaga, nagsasanga ng religious (ang tattoos) sa tiyan? (Tinotoo ba?)

• Mich Kinabuhan si Angelica-sexy sa Jamaica? (Ang sexy nga ba?)

• Pinagtatawanan Mel Tiangco sa MMFF mga! Sus (Di nagsasawang ang mga anak?)

RUSHES SUNDAY

• Si Dingdong Dantes ang artista'y gay sa Indak ni Marian Rivera? (Hirang, si Dingdong Dantes ang artista'y gay sa bahay nanay ng asawang?)

• Marian agaw-eksena sa "Desperadas"!

• Richard Gutierrez feel demure si Jennylyn? (Sus! dami-dami nga word of the week, no-o-doubt.)

• Halos 6 ft. magkatapat ang kanyang (Tita Mommy) is not going to fly, para—kahit pa-convoy pa sumi sa MCII Highway.)

• Ana Mina, 'nakalas' nang kanta ng GMA sa Angelika de la Cruz?

• Sikreto ng pamatay ng Ate? (Actually, the secret is hers a lot.)

• Angelika kumpara sa GMA debut nyang? (She wouldn't be the first now, would she?)

• Pauline Ramirez nasalat ng init sa set? (Sinagot...)

• Bumibi na ulit ang pang-Hollywood set (Kids nanay, pang-Miss Saigon si Bayani Fernando.)

• Sino Aiko si Pretoria, please mag-text. (Photo mag-text na.)

• Aktres sa Jinggoy Aubrey sa Singapore at Saudi Arabia! (Ang ipag-gawa daw?)

• Reunion Kuwit, gaya-mang mga artista kahahiyat (Oo, pala.)

• Reynante Gutierrez, mas nauuhot daw Jake Cuenca kaysa kay Jerwin Gumboc! (Gusto mo.)

• Edgar Allan Guzman, nambang magsasalita. (Think Pilipino Darling.)

HISCHE. Barretto's ring, chest, left, from the LA County Sheriff's office after she was arrested Dec. 27 for DUI. Illegal possession, and driving without a valid license.

FAIRE HAND MCDP Mikaela are seen in this file photo doing a promotional tour of Japan for a fashion brand. The celebrity sisters' perennial sibling rivalry dramatically diminished after their grandfather Marcos Milton announced plans to bar 26 to donate 87 percent of his $2.3-billion fortune to charity.

DEEPLY AFFECTING. A scene showing Max Eigo Boosh is giving his aging father, played by Pius Vos Sydow, a share is one of the touching moments in "The Diving Bell and the Butterfly," one of the year's best films.

The best of 2007

LOS ANGELES—AS 2007 DRAWS TO a close and we look back at the best films and performances of 2007, it's a perfect time to reveal that Double Meridians "Foster Child" came very close to winning the keynote of an international film festival held not too long ago. A reliable source shared the tidbit that the jury's final choice came down to either "Stolen Child" or no other film.

The other movie you had the feel that Dame's film almost ran away with the photo-genic spunky columns about "Foster Child" movie. The source of such crystal cross Chaney Pic Proudie's performance.

Here are the films and performances that resounded us with awe, insight, humor, energizing cliches, thrills and passion as we slogged through a year-round schedule of almost daily movie-going:

Jason Robinson, the son of Director Brian Robinson, proves that the flair he showed in his former debut, the delicious satire "Thank You for Smoking," was not a fluke.

He succeeds again with "Juno," about a hip-talking teenager Ellen Page's who discovering she's pregnant and decides to find a partner set of parents for her unborn child. Juno is aided by the whip-smart script of ex-stripper Diablo Cody.

In one scene, Juno's character tells Michael Cera, the father of the child she's carrying, "You're the coolest person I've ever met, and you don't even have to try." Michael delivers his reply, "actually I try really hard," with such honesty that it gets us every time you've seen the film three times. The creative successes of Ellen Michael, Jennifer Garner, Jason Bateman, J.K. Simmons and Allison Janney also make "Juno" worth watching again and again.

ONLY IN HOLLYWOOD

Robert V. Ingvalez

And now it can be told: 'Foster Child' almost won int'l film fest top prize

Remember when you first saw Lino Brocka's "Tinimbang Ka Subasta't Talong" and Edmund Reyes's "Manoy sa Tubig"? That exhilarating feeling of watching something fresh, original, dynamic and mesmerizing? That's what we experienced when we saw Brad Thornton Anderson's "The Pill Bit Blood."

Good to great

We wondered, how did a director go from being good ("French Dressed Lovely," "Magnificent Seven Nights") to great in our movie? Rewd upon Upton Sinclair's 1920s novel, "Oil." "There Will Be Blood" is anchored by the kitten, astounding performances of Harold Bupp-Lewis as a silver miner who becomes a self-made oil magnate. Paul Brass, who took over after another actor was replaced because he was not matching Daniel's intensity, lives up to the challenge.

Two animated films, "Persepolis" and "Ratatouille," are exceptionally memorable. "Persepolis," Marjane Satrapi's memoir of her childhood during the Islamic Revolution in Iran, won a Special Jury Prize in Cannes last May. Marjane, with co-writer and co-director Vincent Paronnaud, has successfully adapted her graphic novel into a black and white film that is beautiful in its emotions and depiction of events from a girl's viewpoint.

Gone is to these gestures of Pixar to base a story about a mouse who dreams of his owning a gourmet chef visits an incident about earth to-mouse-privy that we should be backed as one of the year's best. Brad Bird's "Ratatouille" is another triumph in the animation house that John Lasseter built.

There is one scene in "The Diving Bell and the Butterfly" that by itself is worth the price of a movie ticket—Mathieu Amalric gives his aging father, played by the remarkable Max Von Sydow, a chance to tell their stories, a bit was said without being spoken. The film affected us deeply on many levels.

Hit list

Other worthy films and performances:

"Michael Clayton"—George Clooney has done it again: make a terribly critical film that is entertaining and compelling at the same time. He and his co-stars are Tom Wilkinson, Tilda Swinton and Sydney Pollack.

"The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford"—Casey Affleck and Brad Pitt.

"I'm Not There"—Cate Blanchett.

"Charlie Wilson's War"—Philip Seymour Hoffman. But the cast is good in any film he appears in, including "The Savages," which also boasts of a fine performance by Laura Linney.

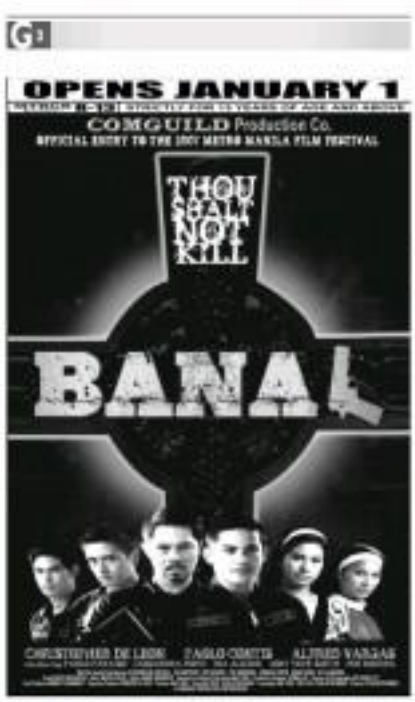
"No Country for Old Men"—Tommy Lee Jones. (As Philip, can do no wrong. He is bad.

TOMORROW: Ari

Fun Snaps from 2007

MOVIE QUEENS TOGETHER. Eugene Domingo and Beauty Gonzalez (far right) pose at the Celebrity Ball Challenge hotel last 24 in Tacloban Promenade, Greenhills.

At left, Gina Pareno and Cherry Pie Picache relive the fun and spirit of starring (and dining) in independent film actresses in a bistro held Aug. 10 in the suppose who's.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IN THEATERS JANUARY 1

'Be

The bes

etter late than never' success stories in the biz

To other young talents like Charice, hang on, you'll eventually have your day in the heady show biz run.

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

writing about not being booked over by her obviously overspending stage mom.

Has, she didn't emerge as winner of the contest, and we expressed our disappointment over this. But, it now turns out that Charice's success had only been deferred. Even before her triumph on television, Charice's talent had already been discovered and appreciated in Sweden and Norway.

So, to other young talents like Charice, hang on, you'll eventually have your day in the hot and heady show biz run.

Our second "eventual success" story involves a screenwriter, Mary Ann Bautista. A decade ago, Mary Ann's screenplay, "Kasal, Kasali, Kasalo," won second place in the Film Development Foundation's (now Cinema) International Screenwriting competition.

Belated recognition

Established local Manilla Maceda believed so much in Mary Ann's potential that she offered the role of the "Kasal" script to four Cinema. Unfortunately, the screenplay wasn't put in production—for various reasons—for years on end.

It took a full decade for "Kasal" to finally be made into a film, starring Judy Ann Santos and Ryan Agoncillo and directed by Joey Reyes—and the rest is pop history.

The film has won a slew of awards, most recently a number of Film Academy of the Philippines Luna Awards trophies, with Joey and Mary Ann shaking the award for Best Screenplay.

Congratulations, Joey and Mary Ann. We trust that this latest success renews your energy and creativity, with more outstanding screenplays to come.

Thanks to the Destiny's success of "Kasal," Mary Ann has "suddenly" become a much sought-after scriptwriter. The good news is that she has three other exceptional finished screenplays just waiting for the right producers and directors to transform them into similarly successful films!

Let's see what another decade has in store for this to happen, shall we?

t of 2007

From page G6

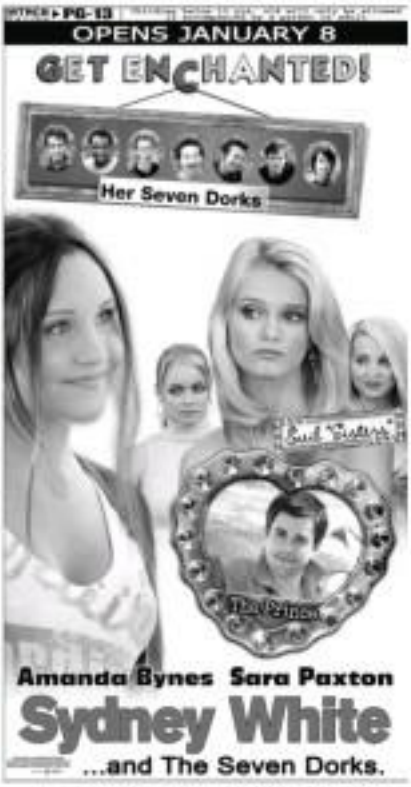
Will there be awards in David Duy Lewis' near future? Is Paul Thomas Anderson's excellent "There Will Be Blood," Daniel Day-Lewis' towering performance is there—and more than one—who deserves an all-in-one. Co-star Paul Dano, playing a preacher, matches the intensity of Daniel's performance.

Hollywood says in a fascinating portrait of a young man who turns his back on the material world. This was based on a true story.

"Once"—Unforgettable songs and performances from Glen Hansard and Markéta Irglova.

"Lars and the Real Girl"—Only Ryan Gosling can make a movie about a guy and his lifelike sex doll engrossing.

E-mail the columnist at nmtorre33@yahoo.com and read his blog, "The Impatient Reporter," on www.inquirer.blogspot.com/impatientreporter.



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